

WHG Kingston

"Washed Ashore"

Chapter One.

The Old Tower—Captain Askew's Family—The Smugglers— Why Jack Askew went to Sea.

There was an old grey weather-beaten stone tower standing on the top of a high rocky promontory, which formed the western side of a deep bay, on the south coast of England. The promontory was known as the Stormy Mount, which had gradually been abbreviated into Stormount, a very appropriate name, for projecting, as it did, boldly out into the ocean, many a fierce storm had, age after age, raged round its summit and hurled the roaring, curling waves into masses of foam against its base, while the white spray flew in showers far above its topmost height. To the west of Stormount, the coast was rocky and fringed by numerous reefs, while on the further side of the bay, also formed by a promontory, less in height than that of Stormount, it consisted of cliffs, broken considerably however by chines and other indentations, and pierced here and there by caverns, some close down to the water, and others high up and almost inaccessible from below. Inland, the country was sparsely cultivated—open downs and fern and gorse-covered heaths prevailing. The more sheltered nooks in the bay contained a few fishermen's cottages, pitched here and there wherever the ground favoured their erection, with very little regard to symmetry or order. Nearer to the water were boat-sheds, and stakes, and spars, on which nets were spread to dry or to be repaired.

But the old stone tower of Stormount claims our attention. It was of considerable circumference, three stories in height, the walls massive and substantial, the strongest gales could not shake it, nor any blasts find entrance. The tower had been the donjon-keep of the ancient castle, part of the wall of which attached to the tower, had of late years been roofed over, and formed a portion of a dwelling-house and offices, the main portion being in the keep itself. The appearance of the tower from the outside, though highly picturesque, was bleak and comfortless, and gave a stranger the idea that it was more

fitted for the habitation of sea-gulls and other wild fowl, than for the abode of man. But those who had once entered within its portal came out with a very different notion. And on a stormy, long winter night, when the wind whistled and the waves roared, and all was darkness around, and the entrance to the bay, easily enough seen in daylight, was difficult to be found, a bright light streamed forth from an upper window of the old tower, sending its rays far off over the troubled ocean, cheering the passers by, a warning to some of neighbouring dangers, a guide and welcome to those who might be seeking shelter from the gale.

People are occasionally met with in this world very like that old tower—rough and weather-beaten on the outside, yet with warm hearts and genial dispositions, cheering and encouraging the wanderer, blessings to all with whom they come into contact. The old tower was inhabited, and about its inmates we have still more to say than about the tower itself. Five miles to the eastward of the tower was a Revenue Station, and fifteen years or so before the time of our history commences, the command was held by an old Lieutenant Cumming, who had obtained it, he used with a touch of satire to tell his friends, as a recompense for forty years' services and numerous wounds in fighting his country's battles.

He was one day standing on the beach, when a cutter brought up in the bay, and her boat soon afterwards came on shore with a passenger. No sooner did the old lieutenant see him than he hurried to the boat, and grasping his hand as he stepped on shore, exclaimed, "Welcome, welcome, old shipmate; I knew, Askew, that you would find me out some day; and so you have; come along!"

Towards his cottage near the beach the old lieutenant and his friend bent their steps, the former assisting the new comer, who having lost a leg, walked with difficulty—a seaman following with a small well-battered valise. Didn't the old shipmates talk as they sat together during their supper! Many a battle they fought over again, and Commander Askew had besides to talk of his own doings since last they parted. He told his friend how in lashing the enemy's bowsprit to the mizen-mast of his own ship, his leg had been shattered, and how he held on to the task till he had done it, and then sank fainting on the deck. He did not utter an expression like a boast, though he thoroughly possessed the characteristics of the true-hearted naval officers of the old school, who feared God, did their duty like lions, and said very little about it. He spoke, too, of a promise he had

made to a brother officer, who lay dying in the cot next to him, and how he had fulfilled it (the request was common in those days), "Jack, you'll keep an eye on my wife and little girl, I know you will."

"Cheer up, Tom, don't be cast down about that matter, God knows that I'll try and do the best I can for them."

That was all that passed. John Askew did do his best. He found his late friend's widow dying, and the orphan girl, not a child, but a young woman, without a friend in the world besides him. He looked about to find a husband for her. To those eyes who could only see the pure bright loving spirit beaming through her countenance, she appeared plain. In vain Jack looked for what he sought. "Why don't you marry her yourself?" said a friend.

Jack said that he was much too old for Margaret Treherne. However, he put the matter before her. Her heart leaped with joy as she thought how she should now be able to devote her life to the comfort of her generous benefactor. A truly happy couple were Captain and Mrs Askew. He had lately got his promotion to the rank of Commander, and was now in search of a house in sight of the ocean he loved so well, where he might live a retired life and bring up the two children God had given him.

"Fit up Stormount Tower," said his friend, half in a joke, "the rent will be nominal, and you'll have as much of the sea as you can desire."

The next day the two brother officers walked over to inspect the tower. The captain decided that he could soon make it comfortable, and accordingly went on to see the proprietor, Mr Ludlow. Mr Ludlow, who resided on his somewhat extensive but barren estate, was glad to find a tenant willing to help to keep the old walls from tumbling down, and who might also prove a pleasant neighbour. In a short time the old tower, under the captain's directions, was put into a habitable condition, and well caulked, as he observed, when he surveyed the work. The furniture was of a modest description, for the captain's means were small. When all was ready, he went away and returned with his wife and two children—one a boy, four years old, and the other a little girl. The boy was named after his father, John, though he was generally known as Jack Askew; the daughter was called Margaret, but more frequently spoken of as Margery Askew. An old follower of the captain's came with him—Tom Bowlby was a sailor of the old school, and knew as little of the shore as a whale does of the inside of Saint Paul's. He loved the

captain as a father, and would have been ready to die to save his life. He had saved it once, by interposing his own arm, which he lost in consequence, and Captain Askew resolved that, should he ever have a home, Tom should share it with him.

Jack Askew grew up a fine bold, generous-hearted boy, and what was better still, fearing and loving God as did his father and mother. In his childhood's days, when not with his parents, he was under Tom's entire charge; but as he grew older the old sailor found it impossible to follow him in his distant rambles, and Jack, who was of a sociable disposition, soon made the acquaintance of every individual of the surrounding population.

While Lieutenant Cumming remained at the revenue station, Jack was constantly out with him and his men in their boats; he was equally intimate with a class of men living on the coast, who, though they professed to be fishermen, either made smuggling their chief business, or were ready on all occasions to help the smugglers. Tom knew very little about their proceedings; indeed, brought up as he had been, had he done so, it is not likely that he would have looked on them with much horror. Captain Askew, of course, knew that there was a good deal of smuggling on the coast, but, except in the case of a few notorious characters, he did not know who were the individuals engaged in it. Jack was a favourite with both revenue men and smugglers, and the latter knew that, should he by chance learn anything of their proceedings, he would not betray them. He used to go off with them when they went out fishing, sometimes with Tom, and sometimes alone, and soon became a very expert boat sailor. One thing is very certain, that his associates did Jack no good. We know from Scripture that "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and, though undeservedly, he got the character of being a wild lad, likely some day to get into trouble.

Such was the opinion formed of him by Mr Ludlow, his father's landlord, who consequently seldom invited him to his house, nor did he encourage any intimacy between him and his son, which he would probably otherwise have done. Mr Ludlow, who was a country magistrate, was a stern, self-opinionated, and narrow-minded man, with very little of the milk of human kindness in his composition. He believed, among other things, that he could put down smuggling by force, and he was engaged in an effort to accomplish the task. Stephen, his son, was rather younger than Jack, a good-looking boy, but he was conceited, headstrong, and not good tempered.

He occasionally went over to Stormount, where he was always welcomed, but he and Jack were not especially good friends; indeed, their pursuits were so different, that even then they did not see much of each other. It happened one day that Jack, having betaken himself to the beach, found some of his friends going off in a boat, and begged to go with them. One or two objected, others said—"Let him come, he's true as gold, he'll not peach."

"Yes, yes, for do ye not see if we get into trouble, they'll not be hard on us for his sake."

This decided the matter. Jack did not hear these remarks, and went. The boat sailed off till she was out of sight of land, when she met with a long white lugger, and out of her received a quantity of goods, bales of silk, and ribbons, and lace, and then returned towards the shore. Night had come on—certain lights were seen, a signal that all was right, and without hesitation the smugglers pulled in towards the beach. Suddenly from behind a point two revenue boats darted out and gave chase. The smugglers' galley was put about and pulled away along the coast. Jack's hitherto peaceable friends were suddenly transformed into fierce savages. Their venture was a valuable one, and they swore that sooner than yield it they would lose their own lives, or take those of their opponents. Jack heartily wished that he had learned the object of their expedition, and had avoided coming. He, by this time, knew enough about the ways of smugglers to make him feel that he ought to have suspected that his friends were about some unlawful work.

Scarcely had Jack left the tower than a post-chaise came rumbling up the steep ascent which led to it. Had it come five minutes sooner Jack would not have gone down to the beach. It contained an old friend of his father's, Captain Summers, who had come to spend a few days at the tower while his ship was refitting. She was a South Sea trader, generally sailing to the western coasts of America and the islands of the Pacific. Everybody in the household was so busy—Captain Askew in talking to his friend, Mrs Askew and Margery in getting his room ready, and Tom in preparing supper, that no one thought of Jack. It was not till they were seated at their evening meal that Jack was missed. Tom went out to make inquiries. He was not very well pleased when he at length learned that Jack had been seen with Bob Herring and some other men going off in Bill Starling's galley, Bill being, as Tom well knew, one of the most determined smugglers belonging to Stormount Bay. "Well, Bob Herring would give his life before any harm should come to the

lad, and Bill's a clever chap, and it's not likely that he'll be getting into mischief," said Tom to himself as he returned homewards.

As long as daylight lasted Captain Askew or Tom had their eye at the large telescope in the captain's own room, ranging over the ocean in search of Bill Starling's galley, but no where was she to be seen, and at length the captain became more anxious than he had ever before been about Jack. He had done his best to prevent Mrs Askew from being alarmed, but was on the point of going out himself to make inquiries about the galley, when a ring was heard at the gate, and Becky Bott, the maid, came to say that blind Peter, the pedlar, wanted to see the captain. Blind Peter with his dog Trusty traversed the country round, selling needles, thread, tape, and such like small wares. Peter seldom failed, when he required it, to obtain a crust of bread, and a piece of cheese, and a glass of cider for himself, and a few bones for his dog. He had always met with a kind reception at the tower, and seemed to have taken a very great fancy to little Margery. "It's her sweet gentle voice I love to hear," he said one day talking to Becky. "That's what goes to my heart."

"What brings you here, Peter, at this time of night?" asked Captain Askew, with some anxiety in his voice.

"I wish, captain, I could say it was pleasant news I've brought you, and yet when there's evil it is better to know it, that we may find a remedy," answered the blind man. "I wouldn't like to frighten the missus though—but it's just this—Master Jack has been taken with Bill Starling, Bob Herring, and a lot of other chaps, by the coastguards' men, with a cargo of contraband, and they are all now on their way to Mr Ludlow's. He's long been wishing for such a haul, and he'll commit one and all of them to prison, and Master Jack too, if you don't go and bail him out."

Peter's news caused a considerable amount of anxiety, for Mr Ludlow's stern character was well known. However, the only thing to be done was to set off immediately to see him. Fortunately the post-chaise which brought Captain Summers was still at the public-house in the village, and the postboy sufficiently sober to undertake to drive to the hall. The two captains found Mr Ludlow seated in magisterial state, with the prisoners before him, making out their committal for trial.

"I am very sorry for this, Captain Askew, very sorry," he remarked, as they were introduced. "The case is clear against all the party, and your son was with them. He is young, and

may have been led astray by others, but a severe example is necessary, and he must suffer with the rest. He will be sent to prison for a year, or to sea in a ship of war." In vain Captain Askew and his friend pleaded for Jack. Mr Ludlow would not listen to their explanations. Captain Summers, as a last resource, offered to take Jack away with him to sea, and, to his surprise, Mr Ludlow at once agreed to the proposal. Jack was accordingly allowed to accompany his father and his friend home.

Jack, though he liked the thoughts of going to sea, was very sorry to leave his father and mother and dear little Margery, but he bravely kept up his spirits, that he might not grieve them more than he could help.

Not a word of complaint either did he utter against Mr Ludlow, or those who had brought him into trouble. "It will be a lesson to me through life to avoid associating with those who are doing wrong," he remarked, and he said but little more on the subject.

There was a void not likely soon to be filled in the old tower, and a greater still in the hearts of its inmates, when Jack Askew went to sea. They occasionally received letters from him, not very often though, and they found that many he had written had not reached them. The last letter they received was dated from a port on the coast of Peru. The ship was about to sail among some of the wide-scattered islands of the Pacific, whose then still savage inhabitants were said to be addicted to the worst vices which disgrace humanity. In vain they waited for another letter—none came. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. Still they hoped, and hoped on, that tidings would come some day or other.

At length rumours arrived that Captain Summers' ship, the *Truelove*, with all hands, had been lost on a coral reef. Captain Askew would not allow himself to believe the report, and he took a journey to London to ascertain its truth. "God's will be done, dear wife," he said when he came back. "He that gave has taken our child away." Many a pious parent has repeated the same words, yet with anguish of heart. Still they went on hoping against hope. However, at length it became too certain that the *Truelove* had been lost, and that not a trace of her crew had been discovered, although a brother captain of Captain Summers had made every inquiry in his power, and a ship of war had been sent to search for them.

Margery was now the sole earthly object round which the affections of Captain and Mrs Askew ere entwined. Tom Bowlby, too, had transferred his love for her brother to her. She was a bright sunny little creature, with light auburn hair, deep blue eyes, and a pure rich glowing complexion, which might have vied with that of the lily, had it not been burnt by the sun and sea breezes. No one who saw her, or heard her joyous ringing laugh, or her voice so soft or gentle when moved by pity or sorrow, could fail to love her. She had learned to think of Jack as of a brother gone on a long, long voyage, whom she should meet again, not for years perhaps, but some day certainly, and so she ceased to mourn for him. The captain had seen so many of his companions launched into watery graves, and knew so well that it is the fate for which all who go to sea must be prepared, that he accepted his lot as common to many another parent, though his gallant boy was not often out of his thoughts. He and Tom seldom, as was once their wont, talked over their adventures and battles, for Jack and his doings was the theme on which, when together, they loved to speak, in subdued tones though, and often with faltering voices and tears springing unexpectedly to their eyes.

Margaret seldom spoke about her boy, but she did not think of him the less, and there lingered yet in her mother's heart the hope—she knew it was baseless, yet she dared not contradict it—that she should yet again fold him to her heart on earth; she knew that she should meet him in heaven. One thing Margaret bethought herself that she would do. She might assist to save others from the fate which had befallen her own dear boy. The day on which the sad tidings reached her she had retired to an upper chamber of the tower which overlooked the sea, to pray that strength might be given her to bear her deep affliction. To those who pray aright, never are their petitions refused. By labouring for the good of others, the sorrow-stricken heart is greatly relieved. "Surely, if this tower could be seen by night as well as by day, it would show the entrance to our sheltered bay," she said to herself. She possessed a large bright lamp; filling it with oil and trimming it carefully, she placed it in the window as the shades of evening closed over the then tranquil ocean. Night after night, without fail, she did the same, allowing no one, not even Margery, to share her task. By and by a reflector and more powerful burners were obtained, and the rays of the lamp were thrown still further over the sea. The fishermen out on the waters soon learned whence the light came, and blessed the hand that placed it there.

Chapter Two.

Margaret—Stephen—The Rocks—The Face—Blind Peter—The Storm.

When the old tower of Stormount was being fitted for a modern habitation, the original arrangements of the interior had been in a great measure restored. Entering at the gateway, a narrow passage led to the foot of a spiral stair which ran up to the top of the building. On each story there was a landing-place, into which the rooms opened. Most of them were in shape like a slice of cake, the largest, used as a sitting-room, almost semi-circular. At each window there was a deep recess—the windows themselves in the lower stories being very narrow, having been made rather as loopholes for musketry than to let in light—while in the upper story they were square and low, formed as ports for such cannon as were used in the days of the Commonwealth. Under the ground-floor some of the inmates suspected that there were vaults, as at two or three spots a hollow sound on stamping hard was elicited, but as there was no apparent way down, the captain had not thought it worth while to break up the pavement to examine them. The dining-room, kitchen, some offices and bedrooms were in the newer part of the structure.

Captain Askew's own room was one of those on the upper story, looking towards the sea. It could not be called his study—for he was not a reading man, and there were but few books in it,—but it contained something of everything, arrayed in the most perfect order on shelves arranged one above another, in cupboards, on tables, and in drawers. It was a workshop, a museum, a laboratory, a model room, a library, a dressing-room in one. Here he sat at work for a large portion of each day, but not often alone, as his wife, or daughter, or Tom Bowlby was constantly with him. In two or three points the captain had changed somewhat of late years. He lived less for himself and more for others than formerly. He took delight in going out among the fishermen and cottagers in the neighbourhood, with his Bible in hand, or with some book on religion, and in reading and explaining the Scriptures. He was also engaged in making the model of a lifeboat, and inventing other apparatus for saving life.

He had likewise been appointed a magistrate, for the especial object of assisting the revenue officers in putting down smuggling, which it was found difficult to do without a strong force of coastguards on shore and numerous cutters afloat. He

most unwillingly undertook the office, but having taken it, set about doing his duty, as he was accustomed to do everything, thoroughly. This of course made him enemies among those he had hitherto looked upon as his friends; still, all but the worst characters acknowledged that the captain was an upright man, and that whatever he did, he would take no undue advantage of them.

Captain Askew sat in his room—the captain's room. It was known by no other name. He was a strongly-built man, with a fine open countenance, florid, or rather sunburnt, with blue eyes—Margery's were like them—and hair sprinkled thickly with frost. The loss of his leg had prevented him from taking much rapid exercise, and he had grown slightly stout in consequence, but he was still hale and active. Margery stood by his side watching his proceedings, and occasionally, when required, helping him in his work.

They were interrupted by Becky Bott, who put her head in at the door, saying, "Please, there's young master Stephen Ludlow a come to see you, Miss Margery, with a book he says." Having delivered her message, Becky popped her head out of the room.

"I don't like that Stephen Ludlow, father, and I wish that he wouldn't come here as he does," exclaimed Margery, pouting. "He never cared for dear Jack, and he has no right to come here, with his proud manners, sneering at everything, and thinking himself the most important person in all the country round."

"He is our landlord's son, little daughter, and it is our duty to treat him with attention," answered the captain. "I have not found his manner un-courteous, though, being an only son, he possibly is spoilt a little at home."

"He is spoilt a great deal, I suspect," cried Margery tossing her head in scorn.

"Well, well, ask him if he has a mind to stop to dinner, then tell him that you are engaged with me, and come back here," said the captain; "he will find means of amusing himself in the meantime."

Margery found Stephen in the sitting-room. He was a pale-faced boy, with irresolution marked on every lineament of his countenance; the curl of his lip, and a frown marked on his brow, were not pleasant traits. "I have brought this book for you, Margery, as I thought you would like it if you have never

read it," he said, presenting a good thick volume, with a somewhat awkward manner.

Margery took it coldly, saying, "Thank you, I'll try and read it, but I have not much time to read by myself, as papa likes to be read to, and so does mamma of an evening when she is at work. Oh! by the by, I am to ask you to stop and dine, dinner will soon be ready, and you can amuse yourself in the meantime on the beach. As I think of it, it is really a pity that you should leave the book, I may never look into it."

"Oh! but this book is not like any other, it is full of adventure. All about a man living on a desert island, with a black called Friday, for I don't know how many years. If it isn't true, it ought to be, and so you'd better read it," said the boy, pressing the book on her.

Margery had become interested with the description of the work, and no longer refused to take it. She thanked Stephen more graciously than before, and, taking the book with her, hurried back to her father. Stephen was satisfied; he liked Margery and the captain, and Mrs Askew, better than most people, next to himself, and he thought that he could pass the hour till dinner-time to his satisfaction on the beach, in picking up shells and other sea curiosities. So, leaving his pony in a shed near the tower, which served as a stable, he strolled down to the shore.

The tide was unusually low, and on turning to the right as he faced the sea, he found that he could get along under the cliff on which the tower stood, by means of a narrow ledge of rock and sand. He had never been there before, and he thought that he should like to see how the cliff looked towering above him. He forgot the danger he was running, should the tide rise and cut off his retreat. He went on and on till he got completely under the cliff, and when he looked up it seemed to bend over above his head, and to reach up to the sky. The rocks were so wet that it was evident the tide had only just gone down, so he thought that he should have abundance of time to get further, and perhaps to get round, so as to climb up the cliff on the west side. Going on, as he happened suddenly to look up, he fancied that he saw, high above his head, a human face looking down on him out of the side of the cliff. He was startled—as well he might—for it seemed impossible that any one could get to the spot. When he looked again the face—if fact it was—had disappeared, and he saw nothing which he could have mistaken for a face. Still he went on; there was novelty in the expedition, and no apparent danger, of which he was not fond, and he

thought that it could only be a very little way longer round. Again he was startled, but this time it was by a cry, and hastening on to the spot whence the sound came, he saw a young girl, in the dress worn by the children of the fishermen, holding on to a wet, seaweed-covered rock, on which she had fallen to save herself from slipping off into the water. He was not so devoid of good feeling as not to wish to help her, so he ran on, and taking one of her hands, he dragged her up and enabled her to reach a spot where the footing was more secure.

She thanked him simply but warmly, and then looking at him earnestly, she said, "You are young Master Ludlow, and I think this no place for you: so get back the way you came, or ill may come of it: there is time for you before the tide rises, but none to spare."

"Who are you?" said Stephen; "I don't know what you mean; I've done nothing to offend anybody."

"Who I am does not matter," answered the girl, "It's enough that you are the son of one who is trying to take the bread out of the mouths of poor folks who never harmed him."

This remark was sufficient to give Stephen a notion of what she meant, and being naturally timid, thanking her for her warning, he hurried back as fast as he could scramble over the rocks. He saw, indeed, that on account of the tide there was no time to lose, for the tops of several rocks which were before exposed were completely covered, and the ledge along which his path lay was becoming narrower and narrower. He began to get alarmed. It seemed a long way to the broad part of the beach. He could not swim. He wished he could, even a little, because he might then swim from rock to rock. He thought that he was very near the end, when the tide came gliding treacherously up, till the water touched the very base of the cliff before him. There was no retreat either backwards or up the cliff. The rocks on which he stood were evidently covered completely at half-flood, while by the marks on the cliff the water must reach far above his head at high tide. He ran on almost shrieking out with terror till the water completely barred his further progress. He stood trembling on a rock, not daring to plunge in and attempt to scramble across. It would have been better for him had he done so boldly at once, for every instant the water was deepening.

He was about to sink down in despair, when he heard a voice shouting to him. This roused him up, and he saw Tom Bowlby waving the stump of his arm, and standing on a rock not twenty

yards off. "Jump in, young master, and come over to me, the water is not up to your middle yet, and it's all smooth sailing between you and me."

Still Stephen, paralysed with fear, would not obey, and at length Tom, losing patience, dashed into the water himself, and hooking him through the jacket by the iron hook which he had fixed to the end of his stump, dragged him across, not, however, without having to swim a short distance, and consequently giving poor Stephen a thorough wetting. They had two places of the same character to pass through, but by the exertions of Tom, Stephen, more frightened than hurt, was at length landed safely on the dry beach, and was able to accompany him on foot up to the tower. On their way Tom told him that he had seen him go down, and hearing from a fishwife the direction he had taken, he had come after him to bring him back. On his reaching the tower, Stephen was carried into a room which had never been used since its last occupant, poor Jack, had slept in it; and while his own clothes were drying, others were given him that he might appear at dinner. He guessed at once to whom they had belonged. Tears came into Mrs Askew's eyes when she saw him, and Margery treated him with more gentleness than she was accustomed to do, forsooth to say, she had generally very little patience with him, he was so far behind her idea of what a boy ought to be. She thanked him again for the book; she had read a few pages and found them very interesting, but would tell him more about her opinion when they next met, and she had read it through. Stephen described the appearance of the face in the cliff, and what the girl he had met had said to him. The captain seemed to think that the face might have been in his fancy, but he was puzzled to account for the girl being where he found her, and not wishing to accompany him, as it was evident that she must have known of some way up from the beach. The captain got a hint which he resolved to make use of as opportunity should occur.

Margery ran off as soon as dinner was over to read more of the book Stephen had lent her, and when she returned to the sitting-room to wish him good-bye, as he was about to leave on his return home, she told him that it was a delightful book, and that she was sure she should like it better than any she had ever read. Stephen did not appear at all the worse for his ducking and fright. Tom brought his pony round to the door, and as he helped him to mount, he advised him to hurry home.—"A storm's brewing, young gentleman, d'ye see, and a

wetting with fresh water will do ye more harm than the one with salt ye got this forenoon," he remarked.

"I don't just want to be reminded of that," answered Stephen, in a tone which showed his annoyance. "But if there is rain coming, I think I had better."

"Put spurs to your pony, Master Ludlow, and get home as fast as you can," said the captain, who at that moment appeared at the door.

Stephen took the observation as a hint to him to be off, and he was too proud, fancying this, to return into the house as he was about to do.

"Ah!—he'll never be what our Jack was," sighed Tom, as Stephen rode off. Dark clouds were coming up thickly from the south-west, the advanced guard of a dense mass rising rapidly out of the horizon. Stephen, looking round occasionally to see if the clouds were likely to overtake him, galloped on down the steep path which led from the tower to the more level country over which his road lay. He had not gone far when the voice of some one from behind a hedge cried out, "Who goes there? Stop, I charge you!"

Stephen was at first not a little alarmed, but directly afterwards he saw Blind Peter, the pedlar, emerge from his concealment, led by his little dog. Stephen had known Blind Peter all his life, and as soon as he saw him he answered, "I am Stephen Ludlow. What do you want?"

"I warn you that you are in danger, young gentleman," said Blind Peter. "I have been waiting for you all the morning. I thought that I should know the tread of your pony's hoof, with your light weight on his back. Don't go back the way you came, or evil may come of it. Take the round by Fairleigh farm. Be advised, young sir, be advised."

Stephen was timid, but he was obstinate, and as the rain was likely soon to fall he was in a hurry to get home. He therefore was disinclined to believe Blind Peter. "For what can any one want to hurt me?" he asked.

"Ask your father, young sir. He may guess better than you can," replied Peter, "But, I say again, go by Fairleigh. Be advised. The round will not increase your ride by more than twenty minutes, and a wet jacket is of less consequence than a broken head."

At the mention of a broken head, Stephen turned pale. He remembered the warning he had from the girl in the morning, and he now no longer hesitated to take Blind Peter's advice. Scarcely, however, thanking the pedlar, he turned his pony's head down a road to the left, and galloped on at full speed.

"He's a poor-spirited creature, or he would have had a word of thanks, or may be a piece of silver for the poor blind man," said Peter to himself, shaking his head as he spoke, and then hastened on towards the tower. He had not gone far when down came the rain, driven by a heavy gale which dashed it furiously in his face. Still he struggled on, his faithful dog pulling at his leading-string to induce him to walk faster, the animal's instinct telling him that the storm had but commenced, and that it was increasing in strength.

Captain Askew had been watching the storm after Stephen left from the window of his room in the tower, occasionally sweeping the horizon with his glass, to see what vessels were passing up and down the Channel, and exposed to its rage. Then he returned to his work, in which he was much interested, and then he went back to the window again. At length he remained longer than he had before done at the window, earnestly looking through his glass. "She'll be lost to a certainty if they don't succeed in getting up jury-masts," he exclaimed. "No chance of that either, she's driving right ashore. She'll anchor, but the ground will not hold her. I must get some of our fellows to go off to her with me. They've courage enough, if they can be stirred up."

He was watching all this time a large ship, which, totally dismasted, was being driven towards the coast. He quickly put on his foul-weather-dress, as he called it, with water-proof boots, and a sou'-wester, and went to his wife's room. He put his head into the room and said, "Margaret, I am wanted out there. God protect you and Margery. I pray that I may be soon back—so will you, I know, dear wife—good-bye." He did not stay to say more, and before she could ask any questions he had hurried from the room.

Tom saw his master leaving the house. "I know what you're after," he said to himself, and with a rapidity which few but sailors can exercise, he had stepped into his rough-weather clothing, and was hurrying after him. Though the captain was superior to Tom in most things, Tom having two real legs, and the captain only one, Tom went over the ground the fastest, and soon caught him up. "You are not going without me, sir, I hope," said Tom, in a tone which showed that his feelings were

deeply hurt. "Did you ever go without me, sir, where there was anything to be done, and the chance of a knock on the head?"

"No! Tom—but you see in this sort of work two hands are wanted, and you haven't got two, and that's the long and the short of it," answered the captain.

"One of them was lost in saving my life. I don't forget that either."

"That's nothing, sir," answered Tom. "If I haven't two hands, I've got a strong set of teeth, which are pretty well as useful as a hand; and who can say that my one arm isn't as good as the two arms of many a man."

"Not I, Tom, not I!" answered the captain; "but it's just this—if anything was to happen to me, what would my wife and child do without you, Tom, to look after them?"

Tom still, however, argued the point. They were walking as fast as the captain could move down to the beach. Suddenly the latter stopped, looked Tom full in the face, and said—"It's just this. Are you captain, or am I?"

"You, sir," answered Tom, touching his hat mechanically, as he was wont in the days of yore.

"Then stay, and do as I order you," said the captain, walking on. "But I'll tell you what, Tom; you may go and look out for volunteers, and then come and help to launch the boat."

The appearance of the captain at the boat was the signal for the inmates of the neighbouring huts to come out to know what he wanted. He showed them the ship driving towards the coast—urged them to come and help him save the lives of those on board; and when he saw that his appeal made but little impression, talked of the salvage money they would receive, and other recompense from those they might save, and from their friends. First one man volunteered—then another, and another, from various motives. Tom had collected more from other quarters, till a fine crew was formed. Once having said they would go, they were not the men to draw back; but they might have been excused had they done so, for it was very evident that the undertaking was one full of dangers of the most formidable character.

The boat, one of the finest of her class on the coast, and fitted with a double row of empty kegs on either side to give her

buoyancy (one of the earliest attempts at a life boat), was now hauled up in a cove on the west side of the bay. The captain had ordered as many ropes as could be collected to be brought down. These were now coiled up carefully at the bow and stern, ready for immediate use. The oars were secured by ropes to the sides of the boat, so that they could not be washed away, but would swing fore and aft. "All ready, lads?" cried the captain, "Now altogether, shove, and off she goes!" The united strength of her crew, and some twenty other men, quickly launched her on the water of the comparatively sheltered bay. "Remember!" cried the captain, standing up in the stern-sheets, and looking back at Tom. "Shove off, lads! Give way! We shall be wanted out there before long."

Bravely the men bent to their oars. Not many minutes had passed when the boat got from under the shelter of the headland, and exposed to the full force of the storm. It seemed scarcely possible that a boat could live amidst the foaming, roaring seas which came rolling in towards the beach. Her head was put at them, and on she went—now hid from view by the seething mass of water—now reappearing on the summit of a wave. On she went, in the teeth of the gale—on—on—rising and falling, every instant in danger of being swallowed up by the fiercely-leaping seas. Many of those who stood on the beach, cried—"The Lord have mercy on them!"

Chapter Three.

The Wreck—Sailors' Humanity—The Negro—The Young Stranger.

Two persons were watching the storm and the progress of the solitary boat over the foaming water, from one of the windows of the old tower. Both, as they watched, were praying that He who rules the wind would protect the husband and the father, and those with him, from the dangers to which they were exposed. Mrs Askew looked through the telescope at the boat, a mere speck in the troubled ocean, till her eyes grew dim and her heart sank with anxiety, and she was compelled to relinquish her post to Margery.

The dismasted ship was some way to the south-west.

"The boat goes on bravely!" cried Margery.

"Now she is on the top of a wave—now she sinks into the trough—she is rising again though—yes, yes, there she is! But the ship—they will grieve to be too late; yet she is driving fearfully near those dark rocks! and I heard papa say that not a human being would escape from the ship that once strikes them."

"Heaven have mercy on them!" ejaculated Mrs Askew. "How many have mothers and sisters, or wives and daughters expecting them at home—poor people, poor people!"

"But perhaps the wind will change, and the ship may be driven along the coast and into the bay, and they may yet be saved!" exclaimed Margery, who was naturally more sanguine than her mother.

"I fear that there is no likelihood of that," said Mrs Askew. "See! the boat is still a long way off, and she makes but slow progress—while the ship is driven on to destruction with even greater speed than at first."

That the above remarks may be clearly understood, it should be mentioned that the ship was a considerable way to the west of Stormount Bay, and that she was driving almost directly on the coast, so that the boat, after pulling out some way to sea to get clear of the cape, had to steer almost parallel with the coast to cut off the ship, their courses being almost at right angles to each other. All the time, though they looked occasionally towards the ship, the eyes of either the mother or daughter were scarcely for a moment off the boat—difficult as it was to keep her in view. Often they gasped for breath, and their hearts sank within them, when she was concealed by the foaming waves; and more than once they could with difficulty refrain from crying out with agony of spirit as she remained longer than before hidden from view. Still, there she was; but as yet she had encountered only a portion of the dangers she had to go through; the greatest was in getting alongside the ship, and next to that was the return through the breakers which were dashing on the shore.

The brave men on board might venture on yet greater danger, should the ship strike, in attempting to go close to the wreck. Both Mrs Askew and Margery knew enough of the state of the case to be aware of this, for there was no lee side on which the boat could approach; and yet they knew that if the captain saw the faintest possibility of saving the lives of any of his fellow-creatures, he would make the attempt.

"I can still see the boat, mother—I can still see the boat!" cried Margery, when Mrs Askew, pale and trembling, had resigned the telescope to her daughter, unable longer to discern the boat, and tinder the belief that it had been overwhelmed by the seas. "She floats—she floats; but she is still a long way from the ship!"

"The ship! where is she?" exclaimed Mrs Askew. "I do not see her."

Both, without the glass, looked out in the direction where the big ship had just before been seen floating.

"Oh! mother, the ship is not there!" cried Margery.

"Gone! gone! is it so?" exclaimed Mrs Askew; "The Lord have mercy on those now struggling out there for their lives amid the raging waves!"

The ship had indeed gone down; and it seemed impossible that any but the strongest swimmers could keep afloat till the boat should reach the spot. Still they watched for an occasional glimpse of her, for they were certain that the captain would not return till he had been compelled to abandon all hope of saving life. Since he had gone out the rain had cleared off, but at the moment the ship disappeared a thick driving rain came sweeping on over the ocean, soon shutting out the boat from view. In vain the lady and her daughter waited till the veil of mist should clear off; and at length their anxiety became too great for endurance. They thought that Tom would come in to relieve this impatience, but he did not appear.

"Come, dearest, come! we must go down to the beach," said Mrs Askew, taking Margery's hand.

Their cloaks and hats were soon put on, and together they hastened down to the shore, where they saw a group of men, with Tom in the midst. In spite of the rain driving in their faces, they pressed on. The men were eagerly looking out over the sea. Some held coils of rope in their hands, others long poles, while Tom had fastened a number of cork net-floats together to form a life-buoy. They drew aside as they saw the lady and her daughter.

"No fear, marm!" exclaimed Tom, when he observed their alarmed looks. "We doesn't think anything has happened to the captain, do you see, but it's just as well to be ready for

whatever does happen, and there's no saying what that may be."

So poor Mrs Askew and Margery thought; and they were thankful that their friends were making such preparations, as seemed to them, for the worst. Indeed, they might well do so. The huge billows came rolling in towards the shore, breaking with a loud roar on the beach into masses of foam, and then rolling back again, looking as if it must sweep off everything it might encounter. Mrs Askew found that some parties of men had gone along the coast to the eastward with ropes, on the possibility of some of the wreck driving on shore in that direction, for they were not aware that the ship had gone down, the mist having come on almost at the moment of the catastrophe. Some of them shook their heads behind the lady's back when they heard of it. The captain would be tempted to go looking about round the spot till darkness should come on, and then the return on shore would be doubly hazardous. One thing was certain, that he would select the spot where they were for running in the boat, as it was the only one for miles along the coast affording the slightest chance of safety. This was owing to its being sheltered by the cape from the south-west, a small bay being formed within the bay. Still the sea rolled in even there with great force, and the landing was an undertaking of great difficulty and risk. Mrs Askew heard the men say that in one respect the boat would gain by the delay, as the tide was on the point of turning, and would set up Channel with the wind, thus enabling her to return more speedily, while the sea might not possibly break so much as it had hitherto been doing. Tom wanted Mrs Askew and Margery to return to the tower; but, though the rain pelted down, and the wind blew against them so that they could scarcely stand, they persisted in awaiting the expected return of the boat.

Now the mist cleared off a little; they peered anxiously out, but no boat was to be seen. Now it settled down thicker than ever, and all they could see was billow after billow crested with foam come rolling in, and breaking with loud roars on the beach, making the very ground beneath their feet tremble. They stood with their hands clasped together, Margery partly sheltered by her mother's cloak. As they could see but a short distance, they listened the more attentively, in the hope of hearing some sound which might give them notice of the approach of the boat. At length Margery started, and bent forward; either her quick ears had distinguished a shout amid the roar of the waters, or she fancied that she heard one. She waited for some time. "Oh! yes, mother, it is—it is! I hear a voice—it is papa's!

He is shouting! He is telling the men to do something! I know it is him!" exclaimed Margery, darting forward. Was it the little girl's fancy, or not? Surely not her fancy, though no one else heard the voice.

Suddenly the mist again for an instant cleared away, and revealed the boat on the summit of a billow, close in with the shore. Now is the time for the men on the beach to exert themselves if they will save the lives of their friends, though the risk of losing their own is very great. The strongest secure the ropes round their waists, and prepare to rush into the sea that they may seize the boat as she touches the beach, before the sea can draw her back again or those in her.

On comes the boat—the captain steers her with consummate skill; the brave crew exert themselves to the utmost, yet with difficulty can they prevent her from being turned broadside to sea, and rolled over on the beach. Those who are watching hold their breath with anxiety. Margery and her mother stand trembling. Tom can do but little except hold on to the end of one of the ropes. The boat draws nearer—then down she comes. The sea follows, ready to sweep all out of the boat, as if disappointed of its prey; but those on shore each grasp a man. Tom seizes his master with his hook, and drags him up the beach. Others attend to the boat. She is quickly hauled up, and all are safe. Margery and her mother were soon in the captain's arms: they were recompensed for all they had suffered by seeing him safe. But where were those they had gone out to rescue? Were none preserved? Yes! one person had been discovered alone, of the numbers who had been on board the ship—a black boy, but he could speak but a few words of English, and could give no account of the ship.

The captain, with his wife and daughter, and Tom leading the young stranger, now hurried up towards the tower. The captain stopped, however, for a moment before he went. "Thank ye, lads, for what you've done!" he said; "it was your best, and you could do no more; and one life saved is better than none. As soon as you've shaken yourselves dry, come up to the tower, and such fare as I can offer you I'll give it gladly."

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye!" answered the crew of the boat, "we'll come by and by, if it's only to drink yours and the missus's health."

Before entering the tower, the captain gave a glance over the ocean. The mist had again cleared off completely, and his keen eye discovered far out a small object—what it was he could not

determine. He pointed it out to his daughter. Throwing off her wet cloak, she hurried to the telescope, that she might ascertain what the object was. She looked eagerly, as it was, probably, she thought, a part of the wreck. After watching it a short time, it became evident to her that it was being drifted by the tide and wind towards the shore. She called her father, who by this time had put on his dry clothes. He asked her to point out the spot where she had first seen it. "Yes—yes, it may possibly drift into the bay!" he exclaimed; "but it will be midnight before it can reach the shore. I must go out, however, and set men to watch, for it is large enough to support a dozen or more people, though it is scarcely possible that they should have clung on in that heavy sea out there."

Once more the Captain and Tom, habited in their foul-weather clothes, repaired to the beach. Darkness was coming on, and the object they were in search of was only for an instant at a time visible as it rose to the foaming summit of a wave. It however remained long enough in sight to enable them to point it out to the men at the huts, several of whom agreed to remain with the captain and Tom on the shore, with ropes, to assist any one by chance clinging to the piece of wreck.

Again Mrs Askew and Margery were left in a state of anxiety, for they knew the danger that must be run in the attempt to draw a person out of such a raging sea. Margery insisted on running down to take her father some food—for he had had none since dinner—and, of course, Becky offered to go, but at that moment Blind Peter came to the door, and he undertook to convey some supper for the captain and Tom; and the black boy, seeming to comprehend the matter, begged by signs to be allowed to accompany him, and to carry the baskets. To Blind Peter day and night were the same, and with every inch of the ground he was well acquainted, so that he had no difficulty in finding the captain and his companions—guided to them by the sound of their voices. Blind Peter was recompensed for his want of sight by the most acute sense of hearing. Accustomed also to be out in all weathers, he cared nothing for the pelting of the storm, or for the clouds of spray which beat over those who stood on the beach, and expressed his intention of remaining till the piece of wreck should reach the shore.

"Then you must share with us the provender you have brought, friend Peter," said the captain, taking a seat on some rocks rather more out of the reach of the spray than where they had been standing. Some lighted their pipes, and others produced bottles of spirits from their pockets, and, being all of them well

clothed to resist the weather, they made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow. Occasionally, one or two got up and ran along the beach, to try to ascertain if the wreck could be seen. Suddenly, Blind Peter started up, exclaiming, "I hear something floating on the water! There is a voice, too, faint, calling for help."

The captain, and Tom, and the other men, with their ropes, hurried after Peter along the beach. He stopped, pointing over the sea. The moon, which had hitherto been obscured, at that moment broke forth from behind a cloud, and revealed a small raft floating among the breakers. Again the moon was hidden by the cloud, and then once more it appeared, and this time the raft was seen more distinctly, and on it appeared a human form, grasping the planks firmly with one hand as he lay along then he waved the other to show that he was alive. No sooner was he seen than the agitation of the young black became very great; and taking the end of a rope from one of the men, he fastened it round his own body, and intimated that he would swim off with it to the raft. There was no time to be lost, for any moment the lad—for lad he evidently was—might be swept off by the breakers, or the raft might be thrown violently on the shore, and he crushed beneath it. The captain and Tom also fastened ropes round their waists, as sailors well know how to do, and rushed into the surf to help the brave black boy. The raft came on towards them; the black boy sprang on it, and seized the lad, who seemed at that moment to have lost all consciousness. An instant longer, and he would have been swept away. The receding waters rushed back with the raft. The black boy, though an excellent swimmer, could scarcely support his friend as those on shore hauled him in, when the captain and Tom rushed to his aid. The captain stuck his timber-toe in the sand, Tom caught the stranger's jacket with his iron hook, and all three brought him at length safely up the beach out of the reach of the surf, which came hissing after them as if angry at the loss of its prey.

"Now, lads, carry him up among you to the tower; a warm bed and some hot grog is what the lad now wants!" cried the captain, who possibly felt that it was high time for himself to get to a warm bed, for he was not so strong as he had been, and he had gone through great exertions.

It was too evident, that if the raft had had more occupants, the lad was the only survivor. The light of the moon, as it shone on him as the seamen bore him up to the tower, showed that he was dressed in a sea officer's uniform jacket, such as is worn by

midshipmen—to which rank, from his youth, it seemed probable that he belonged. Tom had hurried on before, so that when the party arrived, Mrs Askew, Margery, and Becky, were busily preparing and warming Jack's bed for the young stranger. The warmth and rubbing soon brought him to consciousness; but Mrs Askew, observing his exhausted condition, would not let him speak to give any account of himself until he had had some sleep, without which it was evident that food would do him but little good. The captain pretended to be very indignant at being popped into bed as soon as he got home, "like a little boy who had tumbled into the water," he said; but he was not sorry to drink a glass of hot grog which Margery brought him, after which he fell fast asleep.

Mrs Askew watched by the side of the young sailor lad, who now also slept soundly. She thought of her own dear boy, who might have been as this lad was—washed ashore on some strange land; and as she would have wished him to have been treated, so she desired to treat the young stranger. He was older than Jack would now be—stouter and fairer—not like him, indeed, except in possessing an honest and innocent countenance. She did not for a moment suppose that he was her own boy come back to her, and yet, as she watched him, her heart strings began strangely to coil round him, and she felt that he could never be a stranger to her. She was sure that he would be worthy of her regard—judging by the expression of his countenance—this opinion being strengthened by hearing of the affection shown to him by the young negro. She sat up with some food ready to give him when he should awake, and it was not till daybreak, after he had taken it, that she would allow Becky to take her place. When she opened the door she found the black boy coiled up close to it, on a rug. He had left the snug bed provided for him that he might be near the lad, to whom he was evidently attached.

Margery was the first of the family on foot; she longed to hear more about the young stranger, but he was still asleep, and there was no one else to tell her—the black boy was about, but he could not exchange many words with her—so, to employ the time, they looked through the telescope to ascertain if any more pieces of the wreck were floating about near the shore, but nothing was to be seen. The wind had considerably abated, and the sun was shining brightly on the sparkling waves; though she could not forget that they danced over the graves of so many of her fellow-creatures who that time the day before were full of life and strength, and that probably the only survivors were the

black boy and the young lad, now sleeping safely in the tower, who had been on the last night washed ashore.

Chapter Four.

Charley Blount—Peter a Prisoner—Trusty's Assistants—In Hiding.

"I want to know your name and all about you," said Margery, addressing the young stranger, who, having eaten a very good breakfast, and obtained permission to use his tongue, had had his clothes dried, and having dressed in them, looked every inch a midshipman, and spoke like one also.

"Why, you see, Miss Margery, for I understand that is what you are called, that matter is quickly settled. My name is Charles, or rather Charley Blount. My father and mother are dead, and I was sent away early to sea, and have been at sea ever since, and as I am very fond of it I know more about it than most lads of my age. I was on my fifth voyage home from India in the 'Durham Castle,' and expected before long to become a mate, when just in the chops of the Channel, our rigging being slack, we lost all our masts, and at the same time the ship sprung a leak. We little knew how bad it was, but instead of getting up jury-masts, with which we might have steered the ship up Channel, the crew were compelled to work at the pumps; but the leaks gained on us, and so the poor old ship went down, with upwards of a hundred people on board."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Margery. "But how did you escape from the ship?"

"A few of us, when we found that nothing could save the ship, hurriedly put together a small raft, but very few of the rest seemed inclined to venture on it. Just as the ship was going down I sprang on to it with five others; they lost their hold, and were washed off; I retained mine, and was washed on shore, and now I think that I have told you all about myself that you will care to know."

"Oh no! not by half!" answered Margery. "I want to know why the black boy is so much attached to you, and how it was that papa when he picked him up did not see you?"

"That I can easily account for," answered Charley, "as the ship went down a thick fog came on, and I had drifted by up Channel; that is to say, nearly east, before the boat coming more from the north had reached the spot; and as to honest, faithful Crambo, I once upon a time picked him out of the water as he last night helped to pick me out, and he has ever since stuck by me, and I assure you that I value his friendship."

"Oh yes! I can easily understand that," said Margery. "I am reading about a very interesting person, a great traveller, who had a black servant called Friday, and they lived together on a desert island for a long time—it must have been very delightful—but at last they got away. I have not read the book through yet, but when I have I will tell you more about it, and perhaps Stephen Ludlow will lend it to you. I will ask him, for I am sure that you will like it."

"Perhaps I may have read it, Miss Margery, already," said Charley, smiling. "If it is the 'Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,' I have."

"Yes, yes! that is the very book!" exclaimed Margery, "how could you guess so quickly?"

"Because I know of no other book with a man Friday in it, or one so interesting," said Charley; "but I must tell you one thing. Friday is always spoken of as a black, but that is a mistake, as the inhabitants of all the islands in the part of the Pacific where Robinson Crusoe is supposed to have been wrecked are light brown people; some are very light. Many of them are civilised, and have become Christians, but in those days they were perfect savages, and some of them were cannibals."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Margery. "But have you been out in those seas?"

"Yes!" answered the midshipman, "I once came home that way, and we touched at several islands. They are very beautiful, and I should much like to go out there again."

"So should I," said Margery, and she sighed. She would like to have told him all about Jack, but he was as yet too great a stranger to her to allow her to speak to him on a subject which was to her almost sacred, so she said nothing; she did not even tell him that she had had a brother Jack, who had gone to sea and been lost.

Charley Blount soon became a great favourite of the inmates of the Tower, as also with most of the neighbours. His history seemed a sad one, and yet he was as merry and happy a fellow as ever lived. He had but few friends on whom he had any claim, and they were in India; the only one he had had in England, an aunt, was dead. She was the sister of his father—a maiden lady of true piety, who had indeed instructed him in the way he should go, and Charley Blount had not departed from it. This was the reason he was so merry and happy. His happiness was within himself. Captain Askew delighted in him. He seemed to him what his own boy would have been, and it was with inward satisfaction he heard that he had no friends in England to whom he could go.

"Then, Charley, you must make this old Tower your home, as long as you can keep off the salt water," he answered. "We are grave, old-fashioned people, but we'll do our best to make your stay with us pleasant."

Charley assured his friends that he knew when he was in good quarters, and that he should be in no hurry to go away. It naturally occurred to the captain that his young guest would like a companion occasionally, so he sent a note inviting Stephen Ludlow to come over and spend a day at the tower, hoping also that Mr Ludlow would invite Charley in return.

Margery was very anxious to see Stephen to thank him for his book, and to tell him how much she liked it. An idea had also occurred to her which she proposed broaching to him on the first opportunity.

Blind Peter was the general messenger as well as the purveyor of small wares in the neighbourhood, and as he happened to call that day, Becky took the captain's note down to him to carry.

"It's just to ask the young master at Ludlow to come over for a day," she observed, as she gave it to him.

"Then just, Becky, do you give him a hint not to wander away from the Tower while he is here, and tell him to go back by the way he went the last time, mind that," said Peter.

"I'll do as you tell me, Master Peter," answered Becky. "But what's in the wind that makes you say that? You know I am not a woman to go and prattle about other people's affairs, but I should just like to know, that I should, Master Peter."

Blind Peter turned his sightless orbs towards Becky, while a smile played round his lips.

"I'll tell you what, Becky," he answered, "there's an old saying, that a secret is no longer a secret if it's in the keeping of more than one person; so, do ye see, I think as I've got it I'd better keep it. Not but what I own that you are a right sensible woman, Mistress Becky, and it's for your good as much as for my own that I don't tell it to you."

Becky was not satisfied, but she knew Peter of old, and that, as she said of him, "he was as close as wax, and if he was determined not to do a thing no mortal power could make him do it." She made up her mind to abide her time, in the hope that after all she might discover the secret. Blind Peter having received the note, set off on his journey, promising to deliver it either that night or the following morning.

Peter's reception at the hall was always very different to that at the tower, yet he did not refuse the crust of bread and mug of water offered to him at the former, but meekly took it, and went on his way with a thankful heart. On this occasion, having delivered the note at the hall, and finding that both Mr Ludlow and his son were out, he continued his journey. It was towards evening, as he was within a mile or so of the little public-house, near the coast, at which he intended to sleep, that he was overtaken by a man in a cart.

"Ah, Peter! is that you?" said the driver. "Just get in, and I'll put you and your dog and your wares down wherever you may wish to stop."

"Thank you for your offer, Dick Herring—for I know you by your voice,—but my legs are well accustomed to carry me; and they'll do so as long as I need their services, I hope."

"Oh, nonsense, man; there's a storm brewing, and you'll be wet to the skin, if you keep to your legs; but just do you get in, and I'll whisk you along to your journey's end in no time," answered Dick Herring.

"That's kind of you, Dick, anyhow," said Peter; "but as to the storm, I don't feel as if one was coming, and I'm not often deceived."

"Just now you are, though, depend on't, mate. Come, step in, I want to do you a service, and it isn't the like of me that would do you a harm," said Herring, in a persuasive tone.

Peter, who was in reality very tired from his long walk, was glad to have a lift, and his doubts as to Herring's intentions, which from certain circumstances known to him he entertained, having been quieted, he stepped up to the cart to get in. In an instant he felt himself lifted up by strong arms, and placed on a seat next to another man who had not before spoken, and the cart drove on at a rapid rate.

In vain he begged that poor old Trusty might be lifted in with him. "The dog has four legs, and can run as fast as the horse; we can't stop for him," said the man, in a gruff and feigned voice, though Peter thought that he recognised it as that of a notorious smuggler living not far off.

"I told you, Peter, that I'd whisk you along pretty quickly over the road, and I am doing so, you'll allow," observed Herring, in a tone which the blind man did not like, but he said nothing. He was, however, after some time, convinced that they had gone much farther than the two miles which he calculated would take him to the inn where he had proposed sleeping. He became aware, too, that the cart had altered its direction, by the feeling of the wind on his face. On they went at a rapid rate for some time, when Peter inquired why they were conveying him from the place to which he wished to go.

"We've a good reason, Master Peter," answered Dick Herring, in a still more disagreeable tone than before; "you know a thing or two more than you ought to know, and we intend to keep you out of harm's way for a day or two; and that's the fact, if it pleases you to know it."

Peter was aware that expostulation was useless, so he resigned himself to his fate, believing that Herring, though a daring smuggler and utterly lawless, would do him no personal harm. He felt the cart go up and down several rough places, and he was certain that it doubled several times, and had made a full circuit more than once. The object of the smugglers, it was evident, was to mislead him and to make him suppose that he had gone a long distance. He kept his own counsel, however, and in a short time the cart stopped, and he was told to get out. He called Trusty to come and lead him, but no Trusty came.

"The dog couldn't quite keep up with us, and maybe he has lost his way," said Herring. "But never do you mind, Peter, I'll lead you; here, take my arm."

Poor Peter did as he was directed, and then he found himself going up some very rough stone steps, and then he knew by

the change of air that he had been led through a doorway into a room, and that there were people in it, though they did not speak; and then Dick led him into another room, and told him to sit down on a chair, and that he must make up his mind to remain there for some days to come, and that if he promised to be quiet and to behave well, he should be well treated. Saying this, the smuggler walked out of the room, and bolted the door behind him.

Peter immediately got up and felt about the room. It contained, he ascertained, a low pallet bed, a table and a chair, and had a small lattice window, with a bar across it; but it was so small that even without the bar he could scarcely have got through it had he wished. He opened the window gently. He could hear the sough of the sea on the beach, far down below him. "I thought as much," he said to himself, "they have brought me to old Dame Herring's cottage, upon Eastdown Cliff. I was here as a boy more than once, and could find my way from it easy enough, if I had Trusty's help to keep me from any pits or holes dug of late. I know the reason why this has been done. They suspect that I know what I do know, and perhaps more, and they want to keep me out of the way till they have carried out their undertaking. However, they might have treated me worse; so I'll not complain, but try and take matters easily."

Saying this he took off his wallet and the knapsack which contained his wares, and threw himself at his length on the bed, intending to go to sleep. He had not lain there very long when the door opened and some person looked in, and placing something on the table retired again, bolting the door. In a short time several people came into the larger room, most of whom Peter knew by their heavy tread were men in large boots.

"Well! Mother Herring, do you promise us success in our venture, we've been waiting long enough for it?" said one of the new comers in a gruff voice.

"If you do as I bid you this time you will succeed," answered an old woman, whom by her cracked, harsh voice, Peter, even had she not been named, would at once have recognised. "But, as I before told you, if you want to make all secure, get hold of the son of old Ludlow. He dotes on the boy, and you would have the father in your power, if you could get hold of the son."

"So we should, long ago, if it hadn't been for blind Peter; howsomever, we can keep him quiet for some time."

"I mind the time before the captain came to the Tower, the matter was much more easier than it now is," said an old man, whom Peter knew as a daring smuggler all his life. "That was a first-rate place, I believe you."

"Then why not get rid of the captain and his family?" croaked out old Mother Herring; "what business has he to come interfering with people's rights?"

"More easily said, Mother Herring, than done," exclaimed another of the party. "The captain is a tough old bird, not to be driven from his perch in a hurry."

"Ha! ha! ha! May be I'll put you up to a trick or two, my sons, that'll make the place too hot to hold him," croaked out the old woman. "Just you be guided by me, and all will go right, depend on that;" and she gave way to a fit of laughter which almost choked her.

Peter did not hear more of consequence just then, but he had heard enough to show him that the smugglers were prepared to run a cargo of contraband goods on the coast, and in case of failure they wished to get young Stephen Ludlow into their power, that they might make terms with his father. Had it not been for Peter, who had been long aware of their object, they might ere this have accomplished it, and he now guessed that they had discovered that it was owing to him that they had not hitherto succeeded. At length Peter, being very tired from his long walk, to sleep. He had a notion that the people in the next room were taking supper, and indulging in a carouse, of the materials for which their calling afforded them an ample supply.

The smugglers were drinking when Peter went to sleep, and when he again woke some were still at the table, and talking loudly and wildly, though others had, apparently overcome by the liquor, dropped off to sleep. They spoke as men do when the wine is in their heads, without fear or caution. The wildest proposals were made to carry out their objects. One man suggested that if they could get rid of their two principal opponents, Mr Ludlow and Captain Askew, they would have no one to interfere with them. The idea was taken up by others, who did not scruple to talk of murder; though, tipsy as they were, when they spoke of so awful a deed, they sank their voices so low that Peter did not clearly hear all they said. His ear, however, caught one or two ominous expressions, such as—"over the cliff," "sink him out at sea," "entice him from the house," "the sooner the better." These words convinced him that the speakers would not scruple to commit the most

atrocious crime if they fancied it would advance their interests. They made him also very anxious to get away to warn those who were threatened of their danger.

But how to get away was the question. He might fancy that no one was observing him, and yet be watched the whole time. One thing he hoped was that Herring and his associates, trusting to his blindness, fancied that he did not know where he had been carried to, and that he could not possibly get away. By degrees the speakers dropped off, and the loud snores which came from the room showed that the occupants were mostly asleep. He hoped that all might be so. Considering what he should do kept him broad awake. He had not remained so long, when his attention was drawn to a scratching under the window. The night was warm, and the lattice had been left open. He went to the window and put out his hand, and directly he did so he felt it licked by the tongue of his faithful Trusty. He put down his hand still further, and calling the animal by name, it leaped up and he was able to drag it in. Poor Trusty showed his delight at meeting his master by jumping up and licking his face and hands all over. "But can you help me out of this, good Trusty?" said Peter, whispering in the dog's ear.

Trusty, as if he understood the meaning, immediately went to the window, and leaped up on the sill.

"He thinks that I can get out," said Peter to himself. "He is seldom wrong—I will try." Suiting the action to the word, he put his head out between the bars. "Where my head can go my body can follow, but my body must go first just now."

After twisting his body a variety of ways, he worked his way between the bars, to which he held on while he lowered himself to the ground. The leading-string was still attached to Trusty's collar, and taking it in his hand, he said, "Go on, Trusty." Trusty, pulling hard, led the way, as if he was conscious that there was danger in delay, and Peter set off as fast as he could venture to move.

No sound came from the cottage, and he had every reason to hope that he should completely effect his escape. Trusty, that good sagacious dog, worthy of his name, pulled on as if he well knew that it was important to leave old Dame Herring's cottage far behind before daybreak. Peter decided on going first to the tower, that he might consult with the captain, to whom he knew he could speak as to a friend. Should he go to Mr Ludlow, he was afraid that the magistrate would perhaps immediately send off to Dame Herring's Cottage, and attempt to apprehend the

whole body of smugglers. "If he does, what will be the advantage? None at all. I know what I heard, but I cannot swear to the voices of any one of them and they will all escape, and revenge themselves on me; not that I care for that if I can do others a service, but it's hard to suffer and do no good to any one."

The captain was an early riser. He had scarcely been a minute on foot when he heard blind Peter knocking at the door. Peter was admitted, and his story soon told. "I will consider what is to be done, and will give due warning to Mr Ludlow," answered the captain. "But one thing is certain, Peter, that you must lie by for a while, and take up your abode in the tower. The ruffians would treat you with little ceremony if they were to catch you as you were wandering about the country, but they would scarcely venture to molest you while you are here—indeed, there is no reason that they should know that you are here."

There was a small vacant room on the ground-floor of the Tower—into this the captain conducted Peter, and told him that he must consider himself a prisoner there till the smugglers were captured or driven out of the country, and it was safe for him again to go out by himself. He promised him, however, that he should not be without visitors, and that Margery and Charley Blount should come and read to him.

Captain Askew, having made these arrangements for the safety of the poor blind man, considered how he could warn Mr Ludlow of the danger threatening Charley Blount was the best messenger he could select. The hall was nine miles off, but Charley said that the distance was nothing, and that he would be there and back by dinner-time; so having received his instructions he set off, with a stout stick in his hand, in high spirits, observing that should the smugglers wish to stop him, they would have to run very fast before he was caught.

Chapter Five.

Hopes—The Sailor's Story—The Smugglers—Guests at the Tower—Ghosts.

About an hour after Charley Blount had left the Tower, Stephen Ludlow trotted up on his pony, not having met the young sailor on the way. He said that he had come over early, to spend the day, and that if he was asked to sleep he might do so. Of this

the captain was very glad as he did not wish him to run the risk of going back alone, and at the same time he had not sufficient confidence in his discretion to tell him what he had learned from Blind Peter; so he said, "I am very glad to receive you, my young friend; but I must exact a promise that you will not go beyond the open beach, or the downs in sight of the windows of the Tower, unless with Tom or me. I have my reasons, which I need not mention now."

Stephen thought this rather odd, but as he wished to stay, he readily gave the required promise. Margery had for some time been wishing to see him, to talk to him about the book he had lent her, and which she had now read completely through.

"Oh, Stephen!" she exclaimed, when she saw him, "it is such a delightful book. I have never read anything I have liked half so much. It has given me an idea—but I cannot talk to you about it here. You must come out on the beach, and we will sit on a rock and look out over the sea, and then I shall be able to say all I wish."

So they went out together, and easily found a spot to suit Margery's taste.

"Well, Margery, what is it that you have to tell me about my old book?" said Stephen, in a tone which would have told her, had she not been herself so engrossed in her subject, that she was not likely to have a very sympathising hearer.

"Pray do not speak of it in that way, Stephen," she answered. "It's a dear, delightful book, at all events; and since I read it I have been thinking more than ever of dear Jack. You know that he went away in a ship to the Pacific Ocean, and the ship was wrecked, just as Robinson Crusoe's was, and though he was not a supercargo, he was a midshipman, and I don't suppose there is much difference; and at all events, if Robinson Crusoe was saved, and lived on a desert island for many years, though everybody else in the ship was lost, why should not dear Jack have been cast on some island, and be still alive, though not able to get away, or I am sure that he would, and would come home and tell us all about it; for he knows how we all love him and think about him every day."

"What a strange idea!" said Stephen, somewhat coldly. "I thought that it was settled that Jack was dead long ago. Do you really believe that he is alive?"

"Of course I do," answered Margery, with some little impatience in her tone; "it was only those who don't care about him settled that he was dead. I have always, always, been sure that he is alive, over the sea there, a long, long way off; but he will come back when we can send for him."

"Very strange!" muttered Stephen. "But what, Mrs Margery, would you have me do?"

"Stephen, you knew dear Jack well," she answered, fixing her large blue eyes on him; "you used to call him your friend, and friends ought to help each other. If I was a boy, whether or not I was Jack's brother—if I was his friend,—I know what I would do: I would go out and look for him."

"But where would you look?" asked Stephen. "The Pacific is a very wide place, even on the map; and I have a fancy that in reality it is wider still. There are many, many islands no one knows anything of."

"Ah! that is the very thing I have been thinking of," exclaimed Margery. "I am certain that Jack is living on one of those very islands."

"How can you, Margery, be certain of any such thing?" said Stephen, in his usual cold tone, which contrasted curiously with the enthusiastic manner of little Margery.

"How can you ask that question, Stephen?" she exclaimed, half angry that he should venture to doubt the correctness of her most cherished belief. "Robinson Crusoe was wrecked on a desert island and so Jack may be, and I want you to go and look for him, and bring him home! There! I will not be refused! You are old enough and big enough to go,—bigger than Jack was—and you have plenty of money; and your papa always lets you do just what you like, so you say; and besides, you often speak to me of Jack as your old friend; and if he was your friend I ask you to prove it by bringing him home."

When Stephen heard this he first thought that Margery was joking, but the matter was too serious for that; then the idea occurred to him that she had gone out of her mind; but she looked so calm, and quiet, and earnest, that he banished it immediately, and promised to think over her proposal, and speak to his father. He, however, very well knew the answer his father would give, and he himself had no wish to go wandering about the world in search of one for whom he cared but little. Had Margery known what was passing in his mind how she

would have despised him. But she did not; she fancied that he must be as enthusiastic as she herself was, and that it was only necessary to mention her idea for him to take it up warmly. She therefore was prepared to wait patiently, under the belief that Stephen would soon be able to give a favourable answer to her request.

Margery's belief that Jack was still alive received a very remarkable and curious confirmation that very day, after she had parted from Stephen. She was on her way to the village to carry some food to a sick child, when she encountered a rough sailor-like man, who, taking off his hat, begged for assistance, as he was on his way to join his ship at Plymouth, and had spent all his money; and if he did not make haste she would sail without him. He had come last from the Pacific, and complained that he had had but very little time on shore to amuse himself. The mention of the Pacific made Margery instantly ask him if he thought it possible that her brother Jack might be living, cast away on one of the numerous islands of that vast ocean.

"It is a very strange question for you to put to me, Miss, for a curious thing happened as we were steering southward from Vancouver's Island, on our way home. What should we see but a small boat floating, all alone, hundreds of miles, for what we knew, from any land. We made towards her and picked her up, for there was a man in her, or what once had been a man, for he was lighter than a baby, and that I found out, for I lifted him upon deck myself. He was still alive, though the life was going fast out of him, and he couldn't speak above a whisper, and only a few words then. He had been living on fish, we guessed, may be for weeks, by the number of scales we saw at the bottom of the boat. Now this is what he told me. His name was David King. He had been shipwrecked with another young man—a gentleman's son, I know he said, and they were the only survivors of all the crew. He had gone out fishing in their boat, and had been blown off the island. I made out this by fits and starts, as it were, for he couldn't speak without pain, it seemed. Poor fellow! he was far gone, and though the doctor poured all sorts of things down his throat, it was no use, he never lifted up his head, and before the evening he was dead. Maybe if we had seen him a day or two before he'd have lived, and been able to tell us more about himself."

Margery was, of course, deeply interested with this account of the sailor. She imprudently gave him all the money she possessed, and then begged him to come up to the Tower that he might repeat the story to her father. He, however, was in a

hurry to proceed on his journey, and declined coming, possibly not aware of the importance which might have been attached to his narrative, and perhaps selfishly indifferent in the matter. Margery at length hurried home and told her father, and he and Tom went down to look for the sailor, but he had disappeared, and notwithstanding all their inquiries they could gain no trace of him. The captain, indeed, suspected that the man was some begging impostor, who had heard of the loss of his son, and had concocted the tale for the sake of getting money out of the young lady. This was especially Mr Ludlow's opinion of the matter.

Charley Blount stepped boldly out towards Ludlow Hall, singing as he went, not from want of thought, but from joyousness of heart. He reached the hall without interruption. Mr Ludlow was much pleased with his manner and appearance, thanked him warmly for bringing the message, and said that he would accompany him back to the Tower, with a couple of men on horseback. Charley, like most sailors, could ride; that is to say, he could stick on and let his horse go. He did so on the present occasion. They had got within two miles of the Tower, when a number of men, rough-looking fellows, were seen standing in the road before them.

As Mr Ludlow and his party drew near, their gestures became threatening, and it was evident that they meant mischief. The squire was not a man to be turned aside from his purpose. "Charge the fellows, and if they attempt to stop us, fire at them," he exclaimed, putting spurs to his horse. Charley and his men followed his example. Those most frequently succeed who bravely face dangers and difficulties—the timid and hesitating fail. Mr Ludlow dashed on. The smugglers, for such there could be no doubt that they were, had black crape over their faces, and most of them wore carters' smock frocks, which still further assisted to disguise them. This made it yet more evident that they had collected with evil intentions. There could no longer be any doubt about the matter when two or three of them stretched out their arms to stop the horses, but when they saw the pistols levelled at their heads, most of them sprang hurriedly back again. One, however, more daring than the rest attempted to seize Mr Ludlow's rein. Fortunately for the ruffian the magistrate's pistol missed fire, but he dealt the man's wrist so heavy a blow with the butt-end of his weapon that the smuggler was glad to let go his hold lest he should have had another such a blow on his head. Charley laid about him with his thick walking-stick, and in a few seconds the whole party

were out of the reach of the smugglers. They galloped on, however, without pulling rein till they reached the Tower.

"Never in the whole course of my life have I been subject to so daring an outrage, Captain Askew," exclaimed Mr Ludlow, as he dismounted—"It is more like the doings of ancient days than what we have a right to expect in the nineteenth century. I dread to hear what has happened to my boy. Has he reached you safely?"

Stephen, who had just come up from the beach, answered the question for himself.

"So far the smugglers have gained no advantage over us," observed Mr Ludlow, addressing Captain Askew. "But with your leave, my good neighbour, I will take up my abode here with you for a night, that we may the better consult as to the further steps it may be necessary to take to put a stop to these proceedings. I have written to Captain Haultaught, the new inspecting commander of the district, requesting him to meet me here with two or three of his lieutenants, and it will be very strange if we cannot manage to get to windward, as you would say, of these smuggling gentlemen."

Captain Askew could only say that he was happy to put his house at the disposal of Mr Ludlow and those he thought fit to invite, on a public matter of so much importance. He had forgiven, and he believed from his heart, the unfeeling way in which Mr Ludlow had acted towards Jack, under what, he acknowledged, might have been his stern sense of justice; yet he, as a father, could not but remember that he was indirectly the cause of Jack's loss. He felt this, but did not allow his feelings in any way to bias his conduct. Tom and Becky were therefore directed to make all necessary preparations to do honour to the guests present and expected. Mrs Askew and Margery were also not idle in arranging the provisions and the rooms for the guests. Tom was a man of a single idea; that was, that it was his business to obey the captain in all things without questioning. He had learned that lesson at sea and it would have been impossible for any one to persuade him out of it. Becky, however, not having been under similar discipline, did not consider herself bound to obey in the same way as did Tom.

She therefore grumbled very much when she heard that Mr Ludlow was to remain during the night.

"It's bad enough to have the young cub come prowling about the house, but when the old wolf comes and sits down in the

hall, it bodes ill luck to the family," she muttered to herself, though loud enough for her mistress to overhear her.

Mrs Askew made no remark, but of course knew to what she alluded.

"I'd be ashamed to show my face inside the doors, if I were he, after sending the only son of the house away over the sea to die in foreign lands, and then to come up laughing and talking as if he had never done any harm to any one of us."

"We are taught to forgive our enemies not only seven times, but seventy times seven, Becky," observed Mrs Askew, feeling that she ought at length to check her attendant. "Even had Mr Ludlow wantonly or intentionally inflicted an injury on us, it would be for us to receive him as a guest. What he did was under a sense of duty, and we have no right to complain."

"A sense of duty, indeed," muttered Becky, "what would he have said if his precious son had been packed off to sea like poor dear Master Jack? I should care little if the food I have to cook should choke him. I only hope that he'll not get a wink of sleep in the bed I have to make for him. Towards the boy I have no ill will; but I only hope when he grows bigger that he'll not be thinking he's worthy of our Miss Margery—that's what I have to say."

The last words were addressed to Tom, Mrs Askew having left the room.

"What need have you or I to trouble our heads about the matter, Mistress Becky," he observed. "What the captain thinks fit is fit, that's what I have to say."

"I don't gainsay that, Mister Tom," answered Becky, "but what I ask is, why this Mr Ludlow, who has behaved so shamefully to the captain and the missus, dares to come to the Tower, and why they let him?"

"Why, to my mind, Mistress Becky, it's just this—the captain's a Christian of the right sort, and real Christians don't bear malice, and so, do you see, the captain doesn't bear malice," answered Tom, giving a tug to the waistband of his trousers, a nautical trick he had never lost. "If he was a make-believe Christian, like too many folks, I can't say what he might do. Becky, does you say your prayers? Now I do, since the captain taught me, and I know that I axes God to forgive me my trespasses as I forgive others as trespasses against me; and I'll moreover make bold

to declare that the captain says that prayer every night of his life, and has said it too, blow high or blow low, ever since he was a little chap on his mother's knee. There, Mistress Becky you have what I calls the philosophy of the matter, and if I'm not right I don't know no better."

Becky acknowledged that Tom's arguments were unanswerable, though she did not altogether comprehend them. She resolved, however, to dress the dinner as well as she could, and to make up a comfortable bed for the magistrate.

Everything went off as satisfactorily as could have been desired. Mr Ludlow did his best to be agreeable, and Stephen was pleasanter than usual, and listened with interest to the accounts Charley Blount gave of his voyages, and the countries he had visited. The inspecting commander, however, did not arrive. Late in the evening a revenue cutter came off the coast, and put on shore a very stout lieutenant, who came puffing up to the Tower, and announced himself as Lieutenant Dugong, of the Coast Guard. The captain received him cordially, but Becky surveyed him in despair.

"He'd break down the strongest bed in the house if there was one to spare for him," she exclaimed, when she and Tom were next alone. "What can you do with people like him, Mr Tom, at sea? What sort of bedsteads have they got to sleep on?"

"Why, Mistress Becky, that depends whether they are berthed forward or aft," answered Tom. "If forward, they swing in a hammock; and if aft, in a cot. We'll soon sling one or t'other for this here Lieutenant Dugong, and depend on't he'll have no cause to complain."

As may be supposed, every room in the Tower was occupied. Tom took charge of Blind Peter, and Charley Blount was put into the room he had occupied on the ground-floor, and the stout lieutenant had another small room on the same floor, while Stephen was placed in a small one near the first landing, and his father had a room not far off.

The whole family and their inmates retired to rest and to sleep. No one in the old Tower was awake. The hour of midnight had been struck by a clock constructed by the captain. The evening had been calm, but now the wind began to moan and sigh and whistle round the walls, and through any crevice into which it could find an entrance, while the dash of the sea on the beach grew every instant louder and louder, and ever and anon the shriek of some wild fowl startled from its roost was heard, as it

flew by to find another resting-place; giving the notion to the ignorant and superstitious that spirits of evil were flying about intent on mischief.

The clock struck one when Stephen Ludlow awoke with a start, and saw standing close to his bed a figure clothed in white, and from it proceeded a curious light, which, while thrown brightly on him, darkened everything else around. His first impulse was to hide his head under the bed-clothes, but then he was afraid that the creature might jump on him, and so he remained staring at it, till his hair stood on end, and yet not daring to scream out. At length it stretched out an arm, with a long thin hand at the end of it, shook a chain, which rattled and clanked on the floor, and growled forth, "Out of this! out of this! out of this!"

Stephen's teeth chattered. He could not speak—he could not move. He thought for a moment, and hoped that the apparition might be merely the phantom of a dream; but he pinched himself, and became too truly convinced that it was a dreadful reality. There it stood glaring at him; he was too frightened to mark very minutely its appearance. "Out of this! out of this! out of this!" again repeated the phantom, slowly retiring towards the door—a movement which would have been greatly to Stephen's relief had he not felt sure that it would come back again. His eyes followed it till it glided out of the door as noiselessly as it had entered. Poor Stephen kept gazing towards the open door, which he dared not get out of bed to shut, lest he should encounter the phantom coming back again.

About the same time that Stephen saw the phantom, Charley Blount was awakened by a strange noise in his bed-room of clanking of chains and horrible groans; then all was silent, and a voice exclaimed—

"Out of this! out of this! out of this!"

"What do you mean by 'Out of this! out of this! out of this'?" cried Charley, quietly leaning out of his bed, and seizing one of his heavy walking shoes. "Explain yourself, old fellow, whoever you are."

"Out of this! out of this! out of this!" repeated the voice.

"That is no answer to my question," said Charley, undaunted, and peering into the darkness, in the direction from whence the voice appeared to proceed.

"Out of this! out of this! out of this!" said the voice.

"I say, you had better get out of this, or I'll be trying the thickness of your skull with my walking-stick."

There was a loud groan and a clanking of chains; a light flashed in Charley's eyes, and at the same moment he saw at the further end of the room, near the door, a tall figure in white. The instant he saw it the young sailor's shoe was flying across the room, and he following it with his stick in his hand; the ghost, if ghost it was, made a rapid spring through the doorway, and fled along the passage. Charley, having no light, could not follow, so he returned to his room, and took his post behind the door, hoping that if the ghost should come back he might have the satisfaction of trying the strength of his stick on its head, supposing ghosts to have heads. In this case, at all events, it showed that it possessed some sense, as, though he waited till he was almost as cold as the ghost might be supposed to be, it never came back, so he picked up his thick shoes, and with them and his trusty stick by his side, ready for any emergency, got into bed again.

Meantime, Lieutenant Dugong had been sleeping soundly in a cot formerly used by the captain, which Tom had slung for him in the unused room. He was contentedly snoring away, when suddenly he felt a tremendous blow under his back, which almost sent him flying out of his cot, which immediately afterwards was violently shaken from side to side. "Hullo! what's got hold of the ship now?" he cried out, only half awake. "Steady, now! Steady! All comes from bad steering." However, directly afterwards awaking, he struck out right and left with his fists, hoping to catch those disturbing him.

A loud, hoarse laugh followed, and the next moment a light flashed in the room, and a figure in white appeared before him, and he heard, amid rattling of chains and groans, the words, "Out of this! out of this! out of this!"

"Get out of this indeed! I'll see you at the bottom of the Red Sea first!" exclaimed the fat lieutenant, "I've done my duty; and so if you are a ghost I don't fear you; and if you are not, just wait a bit, and I'll give you such a drubbing that it will be a long time before you venture again to awake a naval officer out of his first sleep."

Whether or not the ghost understood this address it is difficult to say; but at all events, as the gallant officer began to get out of his cot, an operation he could not very rapidly perform, it

vanished from his sight, so he drew in his stout legs again, rolled himself up, and under the impression that he was suffering from nightmare from having taken too much lobster at supper, was in two minutes fast asleep, to be awakened again in a minute by the loud report of a pistol, which made him start up and look about him in earnest, not to see anything, however, for it was nearly dark, as a faint glimmer of starlight alone came through the long, narrow, and only window in the room.

What befel the other inmates of the Tower on that memorable night must be narrated in another chapter.

Chapter Six.

Mr Ludlow disturbed—Maggie Scuttle and Blind Peter— Margery disappears.

How the slumbers of several of the inmates of the old Tower of Stormount Bay were disturbed has already been described. The ghosts, if ghosts they were—for that may be doubted—were of a daring character, for they ventured to appear even to Mr Ludlow. He was awakened by a groan close to his head, a chain clanked, and a deep voice uttered the words, "Out of this! out of this! out of this!"

Though broad awake by this time he made no answer, but endeavoured to pierce through the gloom with his eyes to ascertain who was in the room. A minute or more passed by, and he also suspected that he had been dreaming; at the same time he quietly stretched out his hand to take hold of a pistol which he had placed on a chair by his bedside—a dangerous, and in most instances very useless practice. He kept his finger on the trigger, peering into the dark in the hope of seeing the person who was attempting, he suspected, to play off some trick on him. His hand began to ache with holding the pistol in an uncomfortable position. Suddenly a bright light flashed in his face, and a voice groaned, "Out of this! out of this! out of this!" He pulled the trigger, aiming at the point whence the voice came, but the cap alone exploded, a hoarse laugh at the same time bursting forth, when a fearful looking figure for an instant appeared, surrounded by a blue flame, and then again all was dark and silent.

Mr Ludlow was a man of nerve; springing from his bed he rushed towards the spot where he had seen the figure, but

nearly fractured his head against the wall. He sprang to the other side, but only upset some articles of furniture which seemed to have been placed purposely in the way; and at length, after groping about for some time, he was glad to get back, utterly baffled, to his bed. He had no matches in the room, or he would have lighted a candle and gone in search of the disturbers of his slumbers. He could not go to sleep again very easily, so he lay wondering who could have played the trick. "Not Stephen, my own son," he thought, "but that other boy, Charley Blount; he seems up to anything. Still he would not have the audacity to come into my room and attempt to frighten me."

Thus thinking, he was dropping off to sleep when a deep groan awoke him—he listened, all was silent; he thought that he must be mistaken, but he tried to keep awake to listen, directing his eyes at the same time towards the door. Once more there was a groan, and directly afterwards, at a spot where a gleam of starlight came through the window, he caught a glimpse of a tall figure gliding across the room. He fired at the instant; this time his pistol went off. There was a hoarse laugh as before; but when he sprang up, hoping to seize his untimely visitor, the figure had disappeared, and he ran his head against the edge of the door which had been left open. So unusual a sound as the report of a pistol in a quiet household at midnight soon brought most of the inmates to his room. The captain came stumping down in a red nightcap and an old pea-coat; Tom had quickly slipped into a pair of trousers, and had a yellow handkerchief round his head; Becky appeared, her countenance ornamented with huge curlpapers, in a flannel petticoat and piece of chintz curtain over her shoulders; while the stout lieutenant, unable to find his garments in the dark, had groped his way up wrapped in a blanket, when coming suddenly in front of Becky, she shrieked out, "A ghost! a ghost! a ghost!" and ran off, nearly upsetting her master in her flight.

"Stop! stop! I'm not a ghost, my good woman," cried out the lieutenant; "I only wish that you would tell me where I could find any of the gentlemen, and I would break their heads for them, for not a wink of sleep have they allowed me for the last two hours."

The captain and Tom having brought lights, search was made throughout Mr Ludlow's room, and in the other rooms where the noises had been heard, but not a trace of any one having been in them could be discovered. Still, both the captain and magistrate were convinced that not only one person, but

several, must have been in the house during the night for nearly two hours, and probably were still there, for the front and the side doors were closed, and no windows were found open by which they could have escaped. The lieutenant was rather more doubtful as to the character of their visitors, and Becky and Tom shook their heads and declared that they did not believe mere mortals could play such pranks, and get away without being discovered. "If my visitor was a ghost, we shall find the pistol bullet, but I rather suspect that the fellow withdrew it while I was asleep, or he would not have ventured to have remained in the room after he knew I had a fire-arm," acutely observed Mr Ludlow.

On examining the room, not a trace of a bullet could be discovered, though a piece of paper in which it had been wrapped was picked up unburnt. This confirmed the magistrate in the opinion that his surmise was correct, and it proved also the daring character of the people who had played the trick. How they had managed to get into the Tower was the question. The magistrate was puzzled, so was everybody else. Neither the captain nor Tom, who knew the building better than anybody else, could solve the mystery. Charley, hearing their voices, came out of his room, and Stephen crawled out of his, still pale and trembling, and both had accounts to give of their ghostly visitant. Stephen gave the most dreadful account of the ghost he had seen, of the spiritual character of which he seemed to have no doubt. "Tut! boy, ghosts, if there were such things, would not spend their time in trying to shake a stout gentleman like myself out of his cot, in drawing bullets out of pistols, in using dark lanterns, and groaning and growling with the rough voices of boatswain's mates," exclaimed Lieutenant Dugong, with a look of contempt at poor Stephen. "The people who have been in here deal in spirits, I have no doubt, for they are smugglers, and pretty stupid ones too, if they fancy that by such mummeries they can frighten officers and gentlemen as we are."

"You don't mean to say, Mr Dugong, that those are not ghosts which we have been seeing to-night," exclaimed Stephen.

"I wish as how I thought they weren't," cried Becky, "for it's awful to think that the old Tower where we've lived so long in peace should be haunted."

"Fiddlestick, woman, with your haunted Tower!" said the magistrate, who was apt soon to lose his patience; "I suspect that you and your one-armed companion there, who looks as scared as if he had a real goblin at his heels, have been leaving

some door or window open by which these ghosts, as you call them, have found an entrance, and if they have not got out by the same way they came in they must still be somewhere about the building, and you must be held responsible for any mischief they may commit—you hear me, sirrah!”

“Beg pardon, sir, and no offence, I do hear you,” said Tom, stepping forward and giving a pull to his red nightcap, and a hitch to his wide trousers: “but I’ve served his Majesty—that’s three on ‘em and her Majesty, that’s Queen Victoria—man and boy for better than forty years, afloat in all seas, and all climes, and never once have I been told that I wasn’t attending to my duty, and doing the work I was set to do as well as I could. Now I know it’s my duty to see that all the doors and windows are fast at night, not to keep out robbers, because we’ve no reason to fear such gentry down here, but to prevent Mister Wind from making an entrance, and I say it, and again I begs pardon, I did close the doors and windows as securely as I ever did in my life.”

“Oh! very well, very well, my good man, I do not doubt your honest intentions, but assertions are not proofs; if you were to set about it, and find the ghost, I should be better pleased,” said the magistrate.

“I really think, Mr Ludlow, that you are somewhat hard upon Tom,” interposed Captain Askew; “I can answer for his doing his best to find the ghost if he is to be found, and if not I will leave him in charge of the deck while we turn in again; and you may depend on it no ghost will dare to show his nose while he is on duty.”

This proposal was agreed to, and, as after a further search no trace of the nocturnal visitors was discovered, the family once more retired to rest, and Tom, with Mr Ludlow’s pistols in his belt, and a thick stick in his hand, kept watch—walking up and down the passages, and into all the empty rooms, and should he see anything he was immediately to call the captain and the rest of the gentlemen. Once, as he was walking slowly along a passage on the basement story, he saw on the ceiling a faint gleam of light, as if it had been cast from somewhere below, but as he proceeded it vanished, and though he looked about carefully he could not discover the spot whence it had come. He however noted it, that he might prosecute his examination in the morning. He was walking on, when a deep groan came from almost beneath his feet, as it seemed. Tom was not altogether free from superstition, but though he did not disbelieve in ghosts and other foolish notions, he was too brave to be

frightened by anything, and consequently cool and capable of reflection.

"Ho! ho!" he thought, "if that was a ghost which groaned, he has got a light to light himself about with anyhow; and he must be stowed away in some hollow hereabouts, under the floor or in the wall, and there he shall remain till morning light if he doesn't want a broken head or an ounce of lead sent through his body." So he posted himself in the passage to watch the place whence the sound had come. After waiting for some time he took a short turn, when directly his footsteps sounded along the passage there was another groan. "Ho! ho! old mate," he muttered, not aware that Hamlet had used the expression before him; "groan away as much as you like, you'll find it a tough job to work your way through the hard rock, I suspect, and I'm not going to let you frighten me away from my post, let me tell you; the pistol has got a bullet in it this time, understand."

The ghost evidently considered discretion the best part of valour, for after this not a groan or any other sound was heard. Tom watched all the night, hoping that somebody or something might appear, that he might get a shot at it; but not even a mouse crept out of its hole, nor were the inmates of the Tower again disturbed. Everybody was on foot at an early hour, and the old Tower was thoroughly examined inside and out, but no possible way by which the visitors could have entered could be discovered.

Tom's account of his having seen a light and heard a groan was disbelieved; it was thought that his imagination had deceived him. "Maybe it did," muttered Tom to himself, "howsomdever, I'll keep a bright look-out thereabouts, and I've a notion that some day I'll catch the mole coming out of his hole."

The next day the inspecting commander of the coastguard, and another magistrate and two more lieutenants arrived, and a grand consultation was held. Plans were resolved on by which it was hoped that the smugglers would be completely put down. It did not occur to them, possibly, that while the temptation to smuggling was so great that would be a very difficult matter.

Margery had never seen so many people at the lower before, but she acted with as much propriety as if she were every day accustomed to receive guests.

It was supposed at length that the anger of the smugglers against Blind Peter would have passed away; and at all events,

as he could not for ever be kept a prisoner, he begged that he might be allowed to go out again with his faithful dog Trusty. "There is One watches over me and takes care of me, and He has sent that good dog and given him sense to guide my steps, and so I trust in Him and do not fear what can happen to me," he observed, when one morning, not without Captain and Mrs Askew feeling some misgivings, he went forth from the Tower. He had, as usual, his pack on his back and his staff in his hand, as he wound his way down the hill to the hamlet on the seashore. As it was not his custom to tell the people whence he had last come, they, naturally supposing that he had been at a distance, asked him if he had heard of the awful doings up at the Tower since he had last been there? "What are they, Maggy Scuttle?" he inquired of the old woman who asked the question.

"Terrible! Peter, terrible!" she answered, shaking her head; "not but what the captain is a good man, and a charitable man, and a kind man; that I'll allow. He comes down here and reads to us out of a book, and preaches to us, and talks to us about our souls; but do all he can, he can't keep the devil out of his house. It's haunted; no doubt about that. They say that ghosts and hobgoblins, and all sorts of bad spirits go wandering up and down night after night, and won't let the people in the Tower sleep. It's believed that the captain is so vexed that he'll give up the Tower and go away, and 'twill then soon turn back into the ruin it was when he came to it."

"I hope not," said Peter, "he's a good customer of mine and a good neighbour to you, and so we shall both be the losers; and as for the ghosts, he's not a man to be frightened by such nonsense. I don't believe in ghosts, and I'll tell you why—I couldn't see them in the first place; I couldn't feel them, because they are spirits; and if they are spirits, I couldn't hear them, because, do ye see, spirits haven't got the power of speaking; they've no throat nor lungs, nor tongue, nor lips. I've thought of these things as I go along on my solitary way with my good dog Trusty to guide me, for there is nothing to draw off my thoughts such as those who can see have, by what is passing around. My idea is this—that God made everything in order, and keeps everything that He alone has to do with in order—though He leaves man free to do what he likes—be it good or evil. Now God alone can have to do with spirits or ghosts, and I'm very sure that He wouldn't let them play the pranks and foolish tricks all the ghosts or spirits or hobgoblins, and such like things I've ever heard of, are said to have played. I've never yet met a man who has seen a ghost; and what's more, I'm very certain that I never shall."

"What do the people up at the Tower say to the ghosts, which have been appearing there night after night I'm told?" asked Dick Herring, who had the moment before walked into old dame Scuttle's, but unseen by Peter.

"They say, Master Herring, that the ghosts are clever ghosts to get into the Tower as they did; but they are not so clever as they fancy themselves, and that if they don't look sharp they'll be trapped one of these days. You've seen a mole-trap, Master Herring, such as the farmers use—when the mole is caught the end of the stick flies up with him, and there he hangs dangling in the air. Perhaps your ghosts wouldn't approve of a fate like that!"

"I don't see what you're driving at, Master Peter," answered Dick Herring, in a growling, displeased tone; "but I'll tell you what, those who know more than they ought to know are likely to come to grief some day."

"Maybe, Dick, if they make a bad use of what they know," said the blind man, turning his face towards the smuggler; "and I have something to tell you—there is One who watches over the poor blind man, who puts his trust in Him; and He is able to keep him from all harm."

"That's what you say, Master Peter, you'll have to prove it some day, maybe," growled out the smuggler, anxious, however, to change the subject of conversation.

"I have proved it," answered Peter, with a firm voice; "and now good-bye, Dick, I must be round and see who wants anything from my pack."

And the blind man went fearlessly on his way, showing that the confidence he spoke of in God's protecting providence was real, and not assumed.

The subject of the ghosts had by this time pretty well been dropped by the inmates of the Tower, although it was still a matter of wonder how they, or rather the people who acted them, could have got inside. Stephen had come over again to see them, attended by a groom, for he was not allowed to ride about by himself. He said that he must go back early; indeed, it was clear that nothing would tempt him to spend a night in the Tower—and he wondered how Charley Blount could venture to sleep on by himself after the dreadful sights he had seen. "I never have found that sights or sounds could do a man any harm, and so I do not mind them any more than the Scotch

Quaker, who, when a fellow was one day abusing him, observed quietly, 'Say what ye like, friend, with your tongue, but dinna touch me.' If the ghost had come with a dagger, or pistol, or bowl of poison, I should have had good reason for wishing him to keep his distance."

"Oh! Charley, you are so fool-hardy," drawled out Stephen; "I, for my part, don't see any fun in trifling with such serious matters."

Charley Blount burst out into a hearty fit of laughter. "Why, Stephen, I thought from what I have heard, that you were more of a man than to believe in such nonsense," he exclaimed.

"What is it that you have heard that makes you think so?" asked Stephen.

"That you were going to persuade your father to let you go to the South Seas, that you might try and find out what has become of Jack Askew."

"Yes, I know that is what I thought of doing," answered Stephen; "that is to say, Margery wished me to go; but, in the first place, I know that my father wouldn't let me go; and in the second, I don't think that I should like the sea, and my health wouldn't stand it, and altogether I have made up my mind not to go."

"Have you told Margery this?" asked Charley; "at present she fully believes that you are going and that you are certain to find her brother alive in some desert island, like that Robinson Crusoe lived in; as you knew him so well, she thinks that you are more likely than any one else to find him out."

"Oh! that is a mere fancy of Margery's," answered Stephen, in a tone which showed great indifference to the subject. "It is a hundred to one that Jack is alive, in the first place, and equally unlikely that I should stumble on him, even if he is. The captain does not think so, or he would go out himself, or send out, I should think."

"As to that I do not know, but I do know that you ought to tell Margery; at least, I know that I would, if I had made up my mind as you seem to have done."

"You had better go, then, instead of me, if you think so favourably of the little girl's wild scheme," said Stephen, in a sneering tone, which somewhat tried Charley's temper.

"She has not asked me," he answered; "it would make them all very happy if Jack was to be found, and I should think no trouble too great if I could bring him back, that is all I say."

"Oh! you are very generous," sneered Stephen who would have been very glad to please Margery if he could have done so without any risk or trouble to himself.

There are a good many people in the world of similar character: the test of love or friendship is the amount of self-sacrifice which a person is ready to make for the object of his regard. Stephen had at length, at Charley's instigation, to confess to Margery that he had no intention of becoming a sailor for the sake of trying to find Jack. Her countenance expressed as much scorn as its sweetness would allow, as she answered, "Oh! I feared that you did not care for him, and am certain that you do not care for me. Here is the book you were polite enough to lend me, and I suppose that you will not very often come over to the Tower, as we shall have no longer that subject to talk about."

Stephen could say nothing, but looked very sheepish, and soon afterwards ordered his horse and rode homewards.

The next morning the family assembled in the breakfast-room for prayers; but Margery, usually the first on foot, had not made her appearance. She slept in a little room on the first floor, with a window looking out over the sea; it was prettily papered, and had white dimity curtains, and everything in it looked fresh and nice, like herself. Charley ran up and knocked at the door, but got no answer; then Becky went to the room, the door was not locked and her heart sank with an undefined alarm when she found the room empty. She scarcely dared to return to the breakfast-room to tell Captain and Mrs Askew, fearful of the effect the announcement might have on her mistress. She hunted about the room. The little girl had slept in the bed, but neither her night things nor her day clothing were there. Several other articles appeared to have been removed from the room. Becky had an observant eye, and quickly discovered this; otherwise she might have supposed that she had merely gone out unobserved to take a morning walk. As to her having gone away of her own accord, without saying anything to her father and mother, or allowing even a suspicion that any plan was running in her head, that was so unlike dear little, loving, tender-hearted Miss Margery that Becky dismissed the notion as altogether improbable; but then again, how could anybody have got into the house to carry her off? Poor Becky, with grief and perplexity, would have sat down on the bed and cried her eyes

out, but she felt conscious that the so doing would not assist in discovering what had become of Margery; so at length, mustering courage for announcing what she would, she told Tom, rather have cut out her tongue than have had to do, she slowly returned to the breakfast-room. Her prolonged absence had produced some anxiety, and she met Mrs Askew coming to see what was the matter. Becky's face alarmed her.

"Is my child ill? is she dead? oh! speak—speak—tell me the worst!" she exclaimed.

"Oh! don't take on so, marm, Miss Margery isn't ill, and she isn't dead, that I know on; but, oh dear! marm, she isn't there," she answered, bursting into tears. It is needless further to describe the sorrow and consternation which everybody in the house felt when this fact became known, and very soon it was ascertained to be a fact, for, hunting high and hunting low, not a trace of dear little Margery could be discovered.

Chapter Seven.

The Search for Margery—The Slipper—The Vault—Tom and Charley disappear.

Captain Askew was a man of action, and, while the search for Margery was being carried on in the Tower, he hurried down to the hamlet, to ascertain if she had been seen by any one there, or if any one could give him any clue by which to trace her. He went, in the first place, to Dick Herring's cottage, for though of late Dick had always met him with a sulky, surly expression on his countenance, they were once good friends, and he thought that under the present circumstances the heart of even the rough smuggler would be softened; but Dick was away, and Susan, his wife, said that she did not know when he would return—she never did know. Their daughter Polly, whom he met bringing in a bucket of fresh water from the neighbouring spring, also said that she had not seen Miss Margery, though the captain fancied that there was an odd expression on her countenance when she spoke. He therefore cross-questioned her, but not a word to show that she could even guess what had become of Margery could he elicit. He next went to Molly Scuttle's cottage, but the old woman could give him no information; she could only suggest that the ghosts must to a certainty have had something to do with it. When he replied that he did not believe in such things, she answered that they

had evidently carried off his daughter to punish him for his incredulity, and to prove their existence to him. He hurried round from cottage to cottage, but the people only opened their eyes and mouths wide with astonishment, and gave him no information likely to be of the slightest use. Disappointed, he returned to the Tower. There the search had continued with unabated diligence; Tom had made a discovery, but it seemed doubtful to what it would lead. He had found one of the little girl's slippers in the dark passage on the ground-floor, near the spot where he had fancied that he had seen the light and heard the groan on the memorable night when the pretended ghosts had appeared. How it had come there, however, was the question. He carried it to Becky to consult with her on the subject. It was not likely to have been dropped by Margery, because had she been walking she would naturally have stopped to put it on again. Indeed it was absurd to suppose that she had run away of her own free will; it therefore seemed most probable that she had been carried along by some one, and that her slipper had fallen off unobserved. Still the questions, how those who had committed the outrage had got into the house, and how they had got out again, remained unanswered. Becky could solve neither. She was of opinion, "though she would not like to tell the captain or the missus, that the ghosteses had done it, and that they hadn't got in by either of the doors or windows, but somehow or other out of the ground, for that's where them things, I have heard say, always comes from; but it's dreadful to think that poor, dear, sweet Miss Margery should have been carried off into such a place as they lives in," she observed to Tom in a low voice.

"That's all nonsense, Becky," responded Tom. "The captain says as how there's no such things as ghosteses, and therefore it's my belief that there isn't; besides, don't you know that this here old Tower stands on the solid rock? Why there isn't an inch of ground all round it, into which I could run a spade if I tried ever so much, and I should like to see the ghost who could work his way through that: it's all very well for them as is put under the soft black mould of a churchyard, of course, if they has a mind to take a turn or two about the world at midnight, there'd be nothing to prevent them that I sees, except that the captain says it's impossible."

"Oh, dear! Tom, don't go on to talk in that way; it makes me all over in a cold shiver to think what has become of poor dear Miss Margery."

Neither Tom nor Becky were possessed of any education of the most ordinary sort, so they may be excused talking the nonsense to which it must be confessed they gave utterance on the subject. Poor Mrs Askew was bewildered with grief and dismay and anxiety as to what had become of her beloved child. Charley could not believe that Margery would be guilty of any foolish act, yet when he remembered her conversation in the morning with Stephen about going to look for her brother in the South Seas, and her indignation on finding that he would not go, he thought it just possible that she might have set off by herself with some wild scheme of the sort in her head; and yet such a proceeding was so unlike herself that he dismissed the idea as soon as he had conceived it, and did not even mention it to Captain Askew. If she had gone, it was not likely that she would get far without being discovered, and they would soon hear of her. Although Captain Askew was himself a magistrate, it was necessary to give information of the strange event to Mr Ludlow, that he might assist in discovering the perpetrators of the outrage, and Charley Blount volunteered to go over to the Hall for that object. Some time had already been spent in fruitless search, so Charley, after he had snatched a hurried breakfast, set off as fast as his legs could carry him. He was a good runner at all times, but on the present occasion, believing that the faster he went the sooner dear little Margery might be recovered, he ran as he had never before run in his life. Had he been dilatory he might never have reached the Hall at all, for those who were on the watch for any one leaving the Tower, believing that he would have gone at an ordinary speed, happily missed him.

Mr Ludlow was highly indignant at what he heard, and sorry too, for even he admired little Margery, and he at once proposed sending to London for a detective officer. "One of those sharp-witted gentlemen is far more likely than are we thick-headed country-folks to discover how she little girl has been spirited away," he observed. "Of one thing I am certain, that the smugglers are at the bottom of it, and of another, that if they have not a confederate in the house—and old Tom and Becky look honest enough—they have the means of getting in unknown to us. I will write for the officer, and then you and Stephen shall ride over with me and we will look into the matter."

Captain Askew was very grateful to Mr Ludlow for coming over so speedily, but though they again made a thorough examination, as they supposed, of the whole tower, they could not throw any fresh light on the mysterious subject.

"The detective officer, when he arrives, will soon ferret out the truth, however, depend on that," observed Mr Ludlow, as he and Stephen mounted their horses to ride back. But neither the captain nor Charley were inclined to wait till the said detective should arrive to win back what they valued so much. Charley thought again and again over the subject, and talked to Tom about the light, and the groan, and the dear little slipper, and suddenly Tom slapped his leg and said that he remembered when the Tower was being put in order that one of the workmen had told him that there was a vault or cellar under a part of it, from which a passage was said to lead down to the seashore. He was not certain whether the captain had heard the account, at all events he did not appear to have believed it, and of course had forgotten it altogether. Tom confessed that he was very stupid not to have thought of it before, though he was not even then much inclined to believe in the truth of the story.

Charley thought differently, and resolved at once to search for the opening—if such existed—to the vault. He charged Tom not to tell the captain, as it would be a disappointment to him should they fail to make the discovery they hoped for. At that very juncture blind Peter, having heard a rumour of the supposed abduction of Miss Margery, came to the Tower to learn whether or not the story was true.

Charley immediately took him into his counsels. Peter thought over the subject. Yes, he had heard the account of the vault under the Tower, and what was more, he knew an old mason residing about two miles off who had worked there, and who was, he rather thought, the very man who had told him of it. He would go off at once and fetch John Trowel and his tools, and they would very soon burrow into the molehill if one existed.

Charley and Tom occupied the time of Peter's absence in preparing with a rope and a lantern to explore the cavern they hoped to find. They forgot at first that they might possibly encounter opposition, as it was certain that if the cavern did exist it had had occupants, and probably had still, who would not welcome any intrusion on their privacy. Charley, however, at length thought of this. It did not for a moment make him hesitate about carrying out his plans, but he thought that it would be wise to provide himself and Tom with arms. The captain had a brace of pistols and a fowling-piece, and Tom had an old French cutlass which he had taken from the enemy, and treasured as a trophy of his fighting days. Charley at once went up to the captain, who was writing to the officers of the coastguard, and to others who might possibly hear something of

his little girl. "Any news? any news?" he asked, as Charley entered.

"No, sir, but if we could find our way into some of the smugglers' hiding-places, we might learn more than we do now, and as I would rather have a weapon in my hand than trust to my fists with such gentry, I beg that you will lend me your firearms."

The captain made no answer, but pointed to them over the fireplace, where they hung, with a flask of powder and a bag of bullets.

Charley hurried off to avoid having any questions asked him. Tom was delighted to get the weapons, and declared that, although he had but one arm, he could use his cutlass as well as any man. He then put on a belt that he might stick a pistol in it, and advised Charley to do the same, that he might hold the gun ready for use. At last old John Trowel arrived with Peter. He remembered perfectly all about the vault, had once been down it, and thought that he could find the entrance without difficulty, though it had been blocked up; but as to a passage leading down to the beach—of that he could not speak with any certainty.

"No time is to be lost, though!" exclaimed Tom, when he heard this. "Come along, and mind you make as little noise as possible."

The old mason went at once up to the very spot where Tom had seen the light, and he began immediately to work there, scraping away the mortar from between the stones, Charley and Tom helping him, while blind Peter held the lantern. They worked on patiently, knowing that by such means people have frequently let themselves out through the thick walls of a prison. More than half-an-hour had been thus employed when Charley felt the stone on which he stood move; jumping off it, with but little difficulty he lifted it up, when a regular wooden trap-door appeared below. This it was soon found was made to open downwards and how to force it open without making a noise was the question.

Again Charley had to hurry off to the captain's room to borrow a centrepiece, a small saw and a file, and by labouring with these steadily the bolt which held up the trap was cut round, and Tom then having securely fastened a rope to it, the trap was noiselessly lowered and a dark vault appeared below. There could now be little doubt by which way the pretended ghosts

had found their way into the Tower. On a lantern being lowered a ladder was seen, on to which Charley immediately jumped, and fearlessly descended into the vault. As a sailor, he knew the importance of securing a fresh hold before letting go of the first, so he held on to the beam above till he had found a firm rest for his feet. He thus descended for a considerable depth, while Tom let down the lantern by a rope that he might see the nature of the place into which he had got. He at length reached the bottom, and taking the lantern from the end of the rope, commenced an examination of the place in which he found himself. It was a large roughly-hewn vault, which looked as if it had been the quarry from whence the stone with which the fortress was built had been taken. Around it were cells, where some rusty iron bars and ring bolts let into the rock showed that it had been the prison of the castle, and Charley shuddered as he thought of the unhappy people who had once been confined there, where not a gleam of light nor the slightest sound could pierce through the solid rock. As soon as Tom found that Charley had reached the bottom, he also descended—holding his cutlass in his teeth—as actively as most men could have done with two hands. Peter and old John Trowel were directed to wait above. Peter said that from his acuteness of hearing he should be able to judge what progress they were making, and to let Captain Askew know where they were gone.

Blind Peter and old John waited on the top of the ladder leading down into the vault, expecting the return of Tom or Charley, or else to receive some signal from them announcing the progress they had made. Peter listened attentively—"I hear them going round and round the vault to look for the passage," he observed to old John. "It must be a large place, larger than I thought for, and they don't seem to be able to find the passage."

"Maybe there's no passage to find," said John sagaciously.

Still they did not come back, and Peter declared that he could no longer hear their footsteps. They waited and waited, but the explorers did not appear. Old John suggested that there might be some pit or hole into which they had tumbled, and perhaps nothing would ever again be heard of them; but the idea was too terrible to entertain, for Peter had a sincere regard for Tom, and Charley's blithe voice and kind manners had won his heart. They ought at once to have gone to Captain Askew, and procured proper assistance, with lights, ropes, and ladders. Old John was scarcely able to descend the ladder, and did any hole exist, the blind man would most probably have fallen into it. Notwithstanding this he proposed descending, till old John

persuaded him to give up the idea, and at length, when it would very likely be too late to save the lives of the explorers, they agreed to summon the captain. Captain Askew could scarcely understand the account he heard. That there was a vault under the Tower he was ready to believe, as he now remembered hearing the report that one existed, but that his young friend Charley and old companion Tom should have gone into it and been irretrievably lost he would not believe. He would immediately have descended himself to look for them, but that his timber-toe and a rickety ladder did not suit each other. He considered whom he could summon in the village, but they were all more or less connected with the smugglers. He however determined to ask the assistance of some of the most trustworthy among them. He took his hat and was hurrying down the hill when he met one of the men of the coastguard going his rounds. He at once agreed to accompany the captain, but said that by the delay of twenty minutes or so he could obtain the assistance of two or three of his mates, and as he could be of little use by himself, the captain begged him to get them as soon as possible.

The captain then went back to the Tower, and found blind Peter and old John waiting at the trap-door. They had heard sounds, they said, but had got no answer to their shouts. In vain the captain also hailed as a sailor alone can, though his voice had perhaps lost something of its strength. All remained silent below, and his fears for the safety of his friends increased to a painful degree. At last the coastguard men arrived—stout fellows, well armed—with their lanterns and ropes; they were not likely to be baffled in the search. As, however, they stood over the entrance of the dark abyss, the countenances of most of the party turned pale. They were ready to face smugglers or pirates, Russians, Frenchmen, Turks, or savages of every description, all the enemies of their country; but they had heard of the Tower being haunted, and suppose any of the ghosts, or spirits, or imps, who frequented the spot, should start up and confront them! The captain saw what they were thinking about. Following the system he had always adopted where danger was to be incurred, he exclaimed, "Lower me down first, my lads, I'll see what is to be seen." Suiting the action to the word he fastened a rope round his waist, and, with the help of it and the ladder, soon reached the bottom. The men now followed without hesitation, the captain leading the way, and looking round and round the vault. "It is very extraordinary," he exclaimed at length. "I can scarcely believe that they came down here, there is no hole into which they could have fallen, no outlet through which they could have passed."

"It's vary terrible, vary terrible indeed, sir," said Sandy MacGregor, an old Scotchman and the chief boatman. "It's the spirits or the bogies ha' carried them off, there's na doubt about that, and it's only to be hoped that they'll na come and carry us awa' too."

The fear thus expressed very soon communicated itself to the other men, and had a rat started up, although they would not have deserted the captain, their knees would certainly have shaken as they had never done in the presence of a mortal foe.

"Nonsense, my man," exclaimed Captain Askew. "There are no spirits in this vault to hurt us, and depend on it if our friends have been carried away spirits have had nothing to do with it; still, I tell you, I cannot account for it."

It was indeed strange. Every cell, every nook and corner was examined. The sides of the vault were either solid rock or masonry. There was no place through which two people could have passed by any visible means. At length, most unwillingly, Captain Askew told the men that he should return into the Tower. The order was obeyed with wonderful alacrity, and they were well pleased when he told them that he would be the last man up. They were all soon out of the vault, and ready to assist him up in the way he had gone down. He had to confess himself thoroughly baffled. When he talked the subject over with Mrs Askew, they could neither of them account for the way in which their dear child had been so cruelly carried off, nor how Tom nor Charley had disappeared, and yet they were fully convinced that human agency alone had been at work.

Meantime Becky had taken charge of the coasts guard men, and blind Peter and John, and was able, in spite of her grief, to serve them with bread and cheese and cider. As they continued to discuss the matter, Peter was the only one who persisted in asserting that human agency alone had been employed, while Sandy MacGregor as strongly maintained that spirits of a very disreputable nature had a finger in the pie. That, however, like other matters of mystery, was one day to receive a solution.

Chapter Eight.

The Smuggler's Cave—Taken Captive—A Terrible Situation.

As soon as Charley was joined by Tom, he commenced a more thorough examination of the vault; but no outlets could they discover, and they began to doubt whether their nocturnal visitors could have got through it into the Tower. Could there be another passage independent altogether of the vault? They went round and round and could find no door or trap, or opening of any sort.

"I doubt if we are right, after all," observed Charley; "we must try and find some other way down—for way there is, of that I am certain."

"We are right; still, though," answered Tom, "that ladder has had other feet on it of late besides ours; and just let me see how the bolt of the trap-door could have been fastened from below if there wasn't some one to do it. It wasn't the ghostes, I suppose, Mister Charles? and look here—what's this?" he added, as stooping down he picked up another small slipper, the fellow to the one which was known to be Margery's.

The sight of it induced Charley to renew his search, and directly afterwards he discovered in one of the cells a ring, which looked, he thought, as if it was intended to serve as a handle to a stone door. He pulled it with all his strength, and slowly turning on a pair of heavy rusty hinges it opened, and showed a flight of steps cut in the rock, and leading downwards.

"Come along," he whispered to Tom, "we shall soon solve the mystery."

He led, Tom following, and holding the lantern with a torch ready to light at the end of his hook arm, while he held a pistol in his other hand. At first they descended by very steep steps cut in the rock, then the passage was almost on a level and turned and twisted considerably, showing that it had been formed in the first place by nature, and had been simply enlarged by the hand of man.

Charley was, however, thinking all the time far more of little Margery, and how frightened she must have been when carried along it, than of the way in which the passage had been formed. He was expecting also every instant to find himself confronted by a number of fierce smugglers, who would naturally be exasperated at having their long-concealed haunt at length discovered. There could be no longer any doubt as to who represented the ghosts, nor how they had entered the Tower and so speedily disappeared. The passage was somewhat slippery from the moisture which here and there trickled

through the rock, and was clearly not often traversed, which it would have been had the vault above been used as a store-house.

It was pretty evident from the words the smugglers had used that their object was to get rid of the inhabitants of the Tower that they might occupy the vaults as a store-house, and have free egress from it for their goods. They had probably hoped, could they have attained their object, to have baffled the revenue officers for years to come. They must have felt that they had been completely defeated, and, either in revenge or in the hopes of making some terms with Captain Askew, had carried off Margery. Still, Charley could not believe, that, savage and lawless as they might be, they would wish to injure the innocent little girl, and was nearly sure that he was on the right track to recover her.

Charley now proceeded very cautiously, for he thought it possible that the passage might lead to the edge of a precipice to be descended only by a ladder, and an incautious step in advance might send him tumbling headlong down; and he had the sense to know that people even when engaged in the best of enterprises must guard against accidents and failure, and that they have no right to expect success unless they do their best to secure it. Tom wanted to lead, but Charley would not let him.

"No," he answered, "make fast the rope you've got round my waist, then if I slip you'll haul me up."

Tom did so, and they once more advanced. They had gone some way further when Charley again stopped and listened. He heard a low, murmuring sound—it was that of human voices. He and Tom crept on more cautiously than ever. A gleam of light shone on them as if through a crevice. There was evidently either a door or a curtain hung across the passage. This would enable them perhaps to see what was going on within, before entering. Shading their lantern and making as little noise as possible, they got close up to what seemed to be a door or a number of planks nailed together, and placed so as to lean against the entrance. Charley was afraid that while searching for a hole to look through he might knock it over.

At length he found a chink through which he could look into what appeared to be a cavern of some size, but the hole allowed him the command only of a very limited range of vision. In front of him were two men seated on casks at a rough table, made apparently of pieces of wreck. There was a lantern on the

table, and they had account-books and some piles of money, with a bottle or two and some tin mugs. From the way in which they were occupied, Charley supposed that they were principal men among the smugglers, settling their accounts. They were both strangers to him. He was afraid to ask Tom whether he knew them, for fear of his voice being heard. The plan he at once formed was to rush out on them, seize and bind them, and hold them as hostages till Margery should be given up; for it did not occur to him that a young lad like himself and a one-armed man were scarcely likely to overpower two stout, hardy ruffians like those before him. He drew Tom back a little distance where it was safe to speak, and asked him if he would make the attempt. The old sailor was ready for anything. It would certainly be a grand matter to capture the leaders of the gang. He only wished that the captain was there to lead them, then there would be no doubt about it.

Charley's chief anxiety was with respect to Margery. If she was in the cavern, and any of their pistols were discharged, she might be hurt. As regarded the risk he and Tom ran, he did not reflect a moment. The outlaws were to be captured, and he had undertaken the task of seizing them if he could.

"Now, Tom, are you all ready?" he asked; "I will take the man on the right side, you the man on the left—knock them over and hold our pistols to their heads, while we march them up the passage into the Tower."

"Yes, I'm ready, Mr Charles," answered Tom. "But leave the gun where we are, it will be only in our way, and I'll stick to my cutlass. We must be sharp about it, though, for they don't look like fellows who'd stand child's-play; and yet I've known in the war time, two staunch fellows take a ship out of the hands of a prize crew of ten men: and so I don't see why we shouldn't be able to clap into bilboes two big ragamuffins like those there. Come on!"

The hearts of the bravest must beat quick when they are about to engage in a desperate struggle with their fellow men. Charley Blount felt his beat a great deal quicker than usual when he and old Tom were about to rush on the two smugglers in the cavern, and, as they hoped, overpower them. They got close up to the door, and pressing with all their might against the upper part, sent it flat down before them on the floor of the cavern, and rushing over it threw themselves instantly on the smugglers, who, astonished at the sudden noise, had not time to rise from their seats when they felt their throats seized, and saw the muzzles of a brace of pistols presented at their heads.

Nothing could have been better done, and the two smugglers would have been made prisoners, but at the same moment a dozen stout fellows, who had been sleeping round the cavern, and had sprang to their feet at the noise of the falling door, came round them; the muzzles of the pistols were knocked up, Tom's going off and the bullet flattening against the roof of the cavern, and they found their arms pinioned, and instead of capturing others were themselves made captives. Charley felt bitterly disappointed and crestfallen, but not for a moment forgetting the object of his expedition, he looked round the cavern for Margery. She was not to be seen. "Where have you carried the little girl to?" he asked; "we came to fetch her. You had no business to carry her off. Take her back to her father and mother, and you may do what you like with us."

"You are von brave young rogue, *mon jolie garçon!*" exclaimed the man (the captain of a French lugger), whom Charley had seized. "You have no fear, it seems, for ghosts nor for men; but you give me von terrible gripe of my neck. Ah, not you tink we do wid you?"

"I don't know, and don't care," answered Charley, recklessly; "only give me back Miss Margery—that's what I want."

"Ah! is it? She long way from dis, *mon garçon,*" said the captain, in a mocking tone; "Vould you like go see her?"

"Yes, I would," answered Charley; "and let me tell you that if a hair of her head has been injured, you will all have to pay dearly for it."

"Vary well, vary well," said the Frenchman, still mocking at Charley; "Ve vill take you wid us, eh?"

"Come, enough of this, mounseer," growled out the other man, who was only then recovering from the effects of the iron grip Tom had taken of his throat. "If we don't look out, mates, we shall have a whole gang of the coastguard down on us while we stay chattering here. Just settle what's to be done with the old man and the lad, and then the sooner we are away from here the better."

"Give us up the little girl, and neither coastguard nor police shall molest you if we can help it," exclaimed Charley.

"Then no one is following you?" asked the man.

"No," answered Charley, without thinking of the consequences of his reply.

"Then come with me, lads, and we'll stop up the entrance to our burrow in a way which will give plenty of work to any one to find it!" exclaimed the man; "but we'll put irons first on the claws of this young fighting-cock and his companion."

The smugglers were deaf to all Charley's expostulations, and he and Tom speedily found their hands in heavy manacles, which would effectually prevent them from making their escape. Tom did not at first deign even to speak, but now lifting up his manacled hands he exclaimed, "Thank ye, mates, for these pretty gloves; we had intended to put your hands into some like them before the night is over, and just let me advise you, or you'll be caught as it is."

Charles and Tom were left standing by themselves to indulge in meditation, while one-half of the smugglers hurried off to stop the entrance to the passage, and the other half packed up the goods which lay about the cavern, ready to carry them off.

Charley's meditations were not altogether pleasant, but though grievously disappointed at the failure of his expedition, he kept up his spirits with the hope that something might still turn up to enable him either to see Margery, or to learn where she was. He was, however, greatly concerned with the thought of the additional anxiety Captain and Mrs Askew would feel when he and Tom did not return. "Of course the vault will be explored, and if the smugglers stop up the passage as they intend the entrance to it will not be found, and no one will be able to guess what has become of us."

The smugglers were not long about the work, and as soon as they returned they blindfolded Charley's and Tom's eyes, the Captain observing that though they had found their way into the cavern, they should not be able to boast that they knew their way out again. Most of the men were strangers, and by their appearance French; but Charley thought that he recognised the countenances of a few, though as there was but a dim light in the cavern, and they kept out of his way, he could not be certain. As they led him along he heard them muttering in angry tones, and, as he thought, consulting what they should do with him and Tom.

"He knows too much already," said one.

"Dead men tell no tales," growled another.

"A slip over the cliff—nothing could be proved against us," muttered a third.

Similar pleasant remarks continued to be made while he was led up and down passages, and, he was convinced, more than once turned completely round, till at last a rope was fastened round his waist, and he felt himself lowered down what he concluded was the side of a cliff, for the wind blew strongly against him. He was then led along the bench to the westward; this he knew by hearing the surf beating on his left hand, and feeling the wind on his left cheek. He heard the footsteps of several people, but he could not ascertain whether Tom was of the party, and he began to be afraid that they were separated from each other. The way was very rough, and he had great difficulty in keeping his feet. The wind too was getting up, and he heard the men grumbling at having to lead him along, and at being unable to embark; from which he concluded that their original intention had been to send him and Tom off to the coast of France with the French captain.

After going a considerable distance, the wind still increasing, he found that they turned inland up a steep ravine. He was now in a part of the country with which he was unacquainted, he supposed, but still he endeavoured to remember each turn he took, that if necessary he might be able to retrace his steps. More than once, as he went along, he thought that he heard Tom's voice, and he was about to shout to him, but the muzzle of a pistol pressed against his cheek, and a hint from a gruff voice, that if he hallooed his brains would be blown out, warned him that it would be wiser to hold his tongue.

Poor Charley had never taken so unpleasant a walk in his life; he had attacked the smugglers first certainly, and—though he did not know it, as he had no warrant—in an illegal manner, and they could if they had chosen have brought an action against him and Tom for an assault and battery; but, on the other hand, as they were themselves engaged in illegal transactions, this they could not venture to do, as it would have brought their own misdeeds to light.

On the party went, now turning rapidly to the right, now to the left, till Charley felt convinced that they were attempting to mislead him. At last, strong as he was, he was almost ready to drop with fatigue. The men who held him were frequently changed, as if they too were knocked up with their work. Suddenly they stopped, declaring they could go no further, and that there could not be a more convenient place for getting rid of their prisoners.

"Heave them over the cliff!" said one, in a low, savage tone. "The water is deep, and they will be soon washed out to sea."

"Not so certain of that," said another; "better make some stones fast to their feet to sink them."

"Just to prove that they came to their end by foul means!" observed a third with a sneer. "No, no, heave 'em over here, they'll never speak again after they reach the bottom, and no one will be able to tell but what they fell over of themselves."

This agreeable discussion afforded Charley the first intimation that old Tom was near him, and directly afterwards he heard his voice saying, "Do what you like with me, mates, but let that young lad go free. How would you like to have one of your own boys or young brothers treated as you threaten to treat him? There's life and work and happiness in him, and you'd just knock it all to pieces for the sake of a paltry revenge. What good can killing the boy do to any of you? Why, I'll tell you—murder will out, and you'll all be hanged, every one of you."

"Hold your jaw!" exclaimed one of the smugglers; "we've made up our minds, and you'll both go the same way."

Neither Charley nor Tom were of a disposition to beg for their lives; besides, they believed that if the ruffians had determined to kill them, no entreaties would make them alter their minds. Charley, not to lose precious time, tried to prepare himself for death; he thought of the sins he had committed, and endeavoured to repent of them; he forgave all his enemies, even those who were about to kill him, and then, claiming no merit for anything he had ever done, he cast himself at the feet of One he knew to be full of love, and mighty to save. Such is the way a true Christian and a brave man would prepare himself for that great change which must come on all of us.

"Are you going to say your prayers, young man, before we heave you off?" asked a smuggler, in a gruff voice.

"I have said them, thank you," answered Charley, calmly. "Tom, have you said yours? Have you made your peace with Heaven in the only way it can be made?"

"Yes, Mr Charles, I've done that for many a day. When I first came to live on shore with the captain, 'Tom,' says he, 'we must all die, and as we know not the day we should always be ready,' so he showed me the way to be ready, and I've kept ready ever since."

"Now, friends," said Tom, addressing the smugglers, "what do you intend to do? I've again to tell you that you'll gain nothing by committing a cruel murder, and you'll repent of it as long as you live, and longer, far longer."

"Stop his canting mouth, and over the cliff with him! let him preach to the lobsters and crabs if he's a mind!" exclaimed one of the smugglers, and others joined in the vindictive cry.

Charley and Tom on this found themselves dragged along by the shoulders till their feet were over the cliff.

"Now, over with them, let them drop!" cried one of the men.

"No, no," exclaimed another, "let them grip on to the edge with their hands. They'll have time to think about that where they're going, and pleasant thoughts to them!"

This last sally of wit produced a roar of laughter from the savage smugglers who, passing their lives in systematically outraging the laws of their country, seemed no longer to be moved by any of the better feelings of our nature. Still Charley and Tom felt grateful for the few moments of existence allowed them, and clutched the edge of the cliff with all the energy of despair. No sooner had they been lowered into their perilous position than they heard the smugglers, with heartless indifference to the agony they were suffering, moving off, some actually laughing, as if enjoying their misery, though none of them apparently were so utterly inhuman as to wait to see them dashed to pieces by their fall.

Charley, light and strong, felt that he could hold on for some time, but at the same time was afraid of struggling and endeavouring to get up on the cliff lest he should lose his gripe altogether. Tom had stuck his hook into the earth, but he in the same way knew that in attempting to climb up on to the top of the cliff, he might slip, and fall to the bottom. Their hope was that somebody might come by and help them, but that was very unlikely.

"Hold on, Mr Charles, hold on, my lad!" cried Tom. "If I could but just get the point of a rock to put my knee on, I would soon be on the firm ground and have you safe in a moment."

"I'm doing my best to hold on," answered Charles, "but the edge is terribly crumbling; I would make the attempt to get up, but I am nearly certain that I should fail."

"Then don't try, Mr Charles," said Tom, "I'll shout, and may be one of the coastguard men or somebody else will hear us. Help, ahoy! help! help ahoy!" he shouted in a voice which age had not weakened, and which might have been heard nearly half a mile off, had any one been near enough.

Charley then joined him in shouting, but no answer came, and Charley felt as a person does in a dreadful dream, every instant growing weaker and weaker.

"Tom, I don't think that I can hold on many seconds longer," he at last said; "good-bye—I must let go—the earth is crumbling away—I am going—oh?"

At that instant Tom, feeling that Charley's safety depended on his being able to get on the ground above, made a desperate effort—his hook became loosened, in vain he tried to dig his fingers into the earth, and at the same moment that Charley gave his last despairing cry and lost his hold he lost his; down he came, but not as he expected, on the hard rock a hundred feet below him, but into a shallow pool not five feet from where he had been so long hanging.

"Why, where am I?" exclaimed Charley, who, at the same time, had lodged safely on a green mound close to the pool, and tearing off the handkerchief from his eyes he looked about him; "after all, those smugglers are not so bad as we thought them."

"We are at the bottom of a chalk-pit, Mr Charles," answered Tom, "the fellows have played us a somewhat scurvy trick, but I cannot but say that it was better than sending us over the cliff and breaking our necks; howsomdever, the sooner we get out of it the better as I'm wet to the skin, and would like to take a brisk walk homeward to get dry."

A bright moon was shining, though obscured occasionally by the fast driving clouds which came up from the south-west, and by its light they had no difficulty in clambering out of the pit. They were on the top of some downs, at some distance from the edge of the cliff. However, they could see the now foam-covered sea, and distinguish vessels far off running up the Channel before the gale, and thus could take a tolerably direct road homeward, though neither of them had before been thus far from the Tower. They hurried on, being certain that the smugglers could not leave the coast, and hoping that even if one could be captured he would give information where Margery was to be found.

"Margery! poor dear little Margery, she to be all this time in the power of these ruffians!" Charley kept saying to himself as he and Tom hurried on.

Chapter Nine.

A Friend in Need—Margery escapes—Margery's Mission.

Tom and Charley had gone through so much that they could not calculate at all what hour of the night it then was. They had not noted the hour when they commenced their adventure, but remembered that it was then daylight; they had had no dinner, and they felt very hungry. They were hurrying along a path which led through a hollow, when on the hill above them they saw a female figure. She stopped and looked about, either to find the path or in expectation of some one. What could she want at that hour of the night, in so lone a place? They were under the shadow of a stone wall, and she evidently did not see them. They hesitated whether to remain concealed, as it occurred to both that her appearance there was in some way or other connected with the smugglers. However, after waiting a minute, she came down the hill with the light step of a young girl; when, catching sight of them, instead of retreating she came boldly forward. "Oh, Tom, oh, Mr Charles, I am so glad to see you all right!" she exclaimed, as she got near enough for them to recognise the features of Polly Herring, the smuggler's daughter. "I heard that something dreadful was going to happen, and I came along to try and stop it."

"And you thought, Polly, that your father was in it, and may be James Trevany, and you did not wish them to get into trouble. Was not that it, Polly?"

"Yes! Tom, that was one reason," answered the girl, frankly; "another was that I wanted to save you and Mister Charles from coming to harm; and now I'll ask you, if father or James get into trouble, to speak a good word to the captain to help them out of it."

"The captain is a just man, and will return kindness with kindness, no doubt of that," answered Tom. "But I say, Polly, if any one can find out where Miss Margery is, you can, for I am as certain as I stand here that your father, or James, or some of your friends, had a hand in carrying her off. Come, speak the

truth, girl; you'll gain more by helping us to find her than by any other way."

"Yes! it was a cruel shame to carry her away," she muttered, in a low voice; "but I dare not indeed I dare not."

"Dare not do what, Polly?" asked Tom, in a soothing tone.

"Tell where she is, or help you to get her," answered the girl, promptly.

"Then you do know where she is, Polly, and may be who took her away, and all about her," said Tom. "Now what I've got to say is this, that just do you do what's right, and never do you fear what any one can do to you."

The girl still hesitated.

"Just let me ask you a question, Polly," continued Tom. "Is your father in trouble, or James? Tell me that."

"Yes! the revenue men have got some information against them, and are after them both."

"Then depend on't, Polly, the best thing for them is to give up Miss Margery before they are caught," said Tom; "they'll gain nothing by giving her up afterwards. The law doesn't make terms with people."

"But they're terrible people who've got her," answered Polly. "They'd as soon shoot you, or me, or anybody, as look at us, if we came near them."

"We don't fear terrible men," said Tom, laughing, "just do you put us in the way of getting back Miss Margery, and we'll say as many good words as we can for thy father, Polly, and for James too, if he needs them."

"But you'll do no harm to those who have got her, and all you'll say is that Polly Herring, Dick Herring's daughter, helped you to get her back," said the girl, in a tone which showed that she still feared the consequences of what she was about to do.

Charley had not before spoken, but he now thanked her, and urged her to lose no time in restoring Margery to them.

"Come on, then," she said, in a firm voice; "it's a long way from here, but you may be there and back at the Tower with the little

girl before daybreak." These words made Charley's affectionate heart beat with joy. Polly added, however, "We must be careful, though, for if we were to fall in with any of our people it would go hard with you and me too."

Polly had well-knit limbs, and, being accustomed to active exercise, led the way at a rapid rate. She seemed well acquainted with the road, for she never stopped or hesitated as to which path to take, and Charley soon totally lost the direction in which he was going, and Tom had no little difficulty in keeping up with her.

They had thus gone on for some distance, when Polly stopped and stood as if listening.

"I hear some coming; we must hide, and quick too, for if they are those I fancy, and they catch us, our lives are not worth much."

A high bank with a hedge on the top of it was on one side, and as she spoke she led the way through a gap, and the adventurers found themselves perfectly concealed from any one passing along the road. Scarcely had they got behind the hedge, when a party of five or six men appeared, talking in subdued tones, but high enough to allow some of their words to be heard. They were uttering oaths and breathing vengeance against the revenue officers and others, by whom their plans had been defeated. From the mood they were in, Charley felt that it would have been very unpleasant to have again encountered them. Polly waited for some time before she ventured into the road, and then she led on, without speaking, as fast as ever. The ground became very rough, and they went up and down hill till the sound of the surf told that they were once more approaching the sea.

As they were ascending a steep, rocky hill, covered with loose stones, a light appeared before them. They crept on cautiously, imitating Polly's way of proceeding.

"They have taken her there," she whispered, pointing to a cottage, the dim outline of which could be seen. "This very night, if the weather had been fine, they would have carried her across the Channel. There's no time to lose, for they won't let her stay long, and if we don't get her to-day, to-morrow she may be far off from this."

Again she moved on, till she reached a low stone wall, which formed a fence to the garden of the house. "Stay still as death

here," she whispered. "There's a terrible woman lives there. If she was to find out what I was about she'd kill me though I am her own flesh and blood, and you too, and, may be, in her rage, the little girl too." Saying this, Polly stole on towards the cottage.

Charley had expected that he should have been called on to run some personal risk, and to carry off Margery from the grasp of half-a-dozen fierce smugglers or so, and he felt somewhat disappointed at the inactive part he was called on to play. From the words Polly had dropped he guessed that the cottage was the one inhabited by old Dame Herring, who was looked upon by the inhabitants of the country for miles round as a witch, and known to be a very bad character. She took advantage of her evil reputation, and practised on the credulity of the people. It is not necessary to mention her bad practices. A few years before she would very probably have been burnt as a witch; she now ran a risk of being ducked in a horse-pond.

Polly seemed to be a long time absent. Tom had the gift of patience, and was accustomed to wait, and so, though he was fully as anxious as Charley to have Margery safe under his charge, he made no complaint; but Charley began to lose patience, and to wonder what could have become of Polly, contemplating even going to look for her. Those who have had experience in life know that it is much more difficult to wait for an event than to rush forward to meet it; passive courage is therefore often the greatest. Still, when difficulties occur, the wisest course is boldly to face them at once. To the eyes of the multitude the soldier who rushes onward into the thickest of the fight may appear the bravest, and yet he may be a positive coward, urged forward by despair. The truly brave is he who can stand undaunted to meet the shock of the onset. Charley had to wait and wait till his patience was taxed to the utmost. At length his ear caught a light footstep approaching, and Polly came up to him. "I couldn't get the little girl out, for she is shut up in a room by herself," she whispered. "I had to wait till they were all asleep, and then I crept out to tell you. Still, I think if you are careful you may manage to get her. I will show you the window of the room where she is shut up, and if you can climb in and awake her without making any noise you may do it; but understand that there are several men sleeping in the cottage with loaded pistols under their heads, which they are very quick to use; and remember that the slightest noise will alarm them. Come along, but you must wait ten minutes to let me get into the cottage before you begin your business."

Charley and Tom, of course, promised to attend to Polly's injunctions, and eagerly followed her through the garden to the back of the cottage. She showed them the window, which seemed a very small one, about eight feet from the ground; and then, with her finger on her lips, disappeared round the corner. Charley waited what he considered a very long ten minutes, but Tom, who could calculate better, held him tight, as a sign that it was not yet time to move, and at last bent his back with his head against the wall, and signed to him to get on the top of it. This Charley did with alacrity, and grasping the window-sill, drew himself up till he got his knees on it, and he was then able without noise to open one side of the lattice window. There was barely room for him to creep through, but he managed to do so without making any noise, and at length he stood inside. He looked round anxiously into the room. At that moment a gleam of moonlight burst through the passing clouds, and showed him a small bed, and Margery, completely dressed, sleeping soundly and peaceably on it. He was afraid if he awakened her suddenly she might speak or cry out; so taking off his shoes he crept softly up to her, and kissing her brow, whispered low in her ear, "Margery, Margery, don't speak—a friend—Charley has come for you, to take you home."

She opened her eyes, which Charley could see, for the moonbeam cast its light directly on her countenance; a sweet smile came across it, and he thought that she had never looked more lovely; but she evidently thought that she was dreaming.

"Dear Margery, wake up; Charley has come to take you away from this place," he repeated.

"Is it possible?" she asked, in the same low voice in which he spoke, and took his hand. The touch assured her.

"Yes, yes! I am ready; oh, thank you, thank you!"

Charley helped her to rise, and to step softly across the room. He then got through the window, and holding on, as only a sailor or a cat could, to nothing, helped her through and lifted her down to Tom, who couldn't refrain from giving her a hearty kiss in his joy at recovering her. Charley then put on his shoes, and dropped noiselessly to the ground. "They brought me here without shoes, and would give me none for fear I should run away," she whispered; "but I will try to walk without them."

"Not for worlds, Margery," answered Charley. "We'll carry you all the way, never fear."

"Aye, aye, Miss Margery," said Tom; "I've carried you many a mile when you was a baby and you was no heavier than a feather, and I've still strength left in my old arms to carry you now that you are a young lady nearly grown, I may say."

Margery could only murmur her thanks, as Tom bore her in his arms across the garden and down the hill at a rapid rate, Charley bringing up the rear, and ready to do battle should they be pursued.

Polly had so far proved faithful, and Charley hoped sincerely that the part she had played in the affair might not be discovered by her associates. Still, he cast many an anxious glance behind him as they descended the steep, rough hill side, lest any of the smugglers should have been aroused, and have come in pursuit. Their chief difficulty was to find the way; but they guessed pretty correctly the direction of the Tower, the moon still affording them the assistance of her light. They did not even stop to rest, Tom declaring that Miss Margery was still almost as light as a feather, if not quite as light as when she was a baby. They had thus made good progress, when Charley said that he heard footsteps.

"May be," answered Tom; "but they must be stout fellows who will dare to take our Miss Margery from us."

"I am not at all afraid of anybody now," said Margery. "I am sure, Charley, that you and Tom would not let them take me from you." Charley of course promised that no one should, and as they did not believe that any smugglers would venture to interfere with them, should any be met, they continued their course. However, before they had gone much further, two very suspicious-looking personages overtook them and asked various questions, as to whence they had come and where they were going.

"Easily answered, mates," said Tom; "we are coming from the place we last stopped at, and we are going home, and our business is nobody else's, do ye see?"

Whatever had been the intentions of the men, Tom's firm bearing, and Charley's determined air, as he brought up the rear, following Tom as a bull-terrier does the heels of his master, ready to fly at any one venturing to interfere with him, made them alter their purpose.

"I thought as how those piratical craft would sheer off if we showed a bold front," said Tom, as the men turned down a lane

on one side. "It's a great point to show an enemy that you are wide awake and not afraid of him. Mind you that, Master Charley. There's a great enemy, too, who is always going about seeking whom he may devour; and if he finds that we are prepared for him, and know how to resist him, he'll be off like a shot."

At length the door of the Tower was reached. Becky, who opened it, instead of welcoming them as they might naturally have expected that she would, stared wildly at them, and then throwing her apron over her head ran back screaming, "There are ghosts—there are ghosts—there are ghosts at the door!"

"No we ain't," said Tom, bluntly, as he entered; "but we've brought back Miss Margery all right, and she'll be glad of some grub presently, and so shall we by and by I'm thinking,—eh, Master Charley? But just do you first, as soon as you have got your five senses back, run up and tell the captain and missis. They'll not be sorry to hear the news, at all events."

In another minute Margery was in her parents' arms, and they were thanking Heaven that she had been safely restored to them.

Little Margery had kept up her courage wonderfully, from the moment she was seized till her return home. She said that she was awake and thought that she saw Becky collecting her clothes, when suddenly she was taken up in the arms of a woman; she supposed her mouth was gagged and her eyes blinded, and she was carried swiftly along, down into some damp place and along passages into the open air, and finally into the cottage where Charley had found her. She had had no fear about being ill treated, for she did not think any one would hurt a little girl like herself. She was very grateful, however, to Charley and Tom for all the risk they had run to rescue her.

Tom and Charley's adventures created great surprise, for the captain could not conceive how they could have got out of the vaults; and it was not until they had all together paid another visit to it that they discovered the aperture lately blocked up with loose stones, and then at length guessed that it had been done by the smugglers to cut off pursuit. The result of the whole proceeding was the very reverse of what the smugglers had expected. In their foolish ignorance they fancied that they could frighten away a sensible man, like Captain Askew, from the Tower by their notable scheme of making it be supposed that it was haunted.

We may be surprised at their gross representations of ghosts and spirits, but which were undoubtedly exact imitations of their own conceptions of such things; nor does it at all follow, that because some of them ventured to appear in the character of ghosts, they did not firmly believe in their existence. Probably their own superstitious fears would as easily have been worked on as they hoped to work on those of others.

A considerable amount of the property of the gang, which they had not time to remove, was seized when they left their chief stronghold and place of rendezvous on the coast, where they had long defied the vigilance of the revenue officers, and many of them were driven away from the coast. The entrance to the cave from the sea was carefully blocked up, so that no one could again undermine the Tower, and attempt to play off such tricks on the inmates.

Mr Ludlow, accompanied by Stephen, rode over to the Tower to congratulate his tenants on the recovery of their daughter. "I am very glad to see the young lady back, and safe, and well; but," he added, "I have a bone to pick with her. What do you think, captain? She has actually been endeavouring to persuade my only son to go to sea, that he may spend his life in searching for your poor boy, whom she asserts is still alive in some island of the Pacific, either in consequence of reading a child's book, or from some cock-and-bull story which she heard from an old sailor one day, who was never afterwards to be found to corroborate the truth of his narrative. I wish bygones to be bygones, and I would rather not have alluded to the subject, but I really do not know what powerful influence she may exert over him, though I cannot say that at present he has any fancy for the undertaking; but I wish, at all events, to nip the project in the bud."

As may be supposed, Captain Askew was not a little astonished at this address, while he could not but be sensible of the want of feeling of the man who could thus coldly speak of his long-lost son, that son who had been banished in consequence of Mr Ludlow's own stern decree. "I was not aware that my little Margery entertained any such notion," he answered mildly. "Did she, I should have supposed that your son, Stephen, however much she may esteem him as a friend, was the very last person she would have selected for the scheme."

"Oh, the foolish boy lent her a book, a copy, I believe, of Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe,' and as he describes a person living on an island for a number of years by himself, she has taken it into her head that her brother may have escaped shipwreck,

and be still alive on one of the many islands which I understand stud parts of the Pacific."

"I have only to repeat that my daughter has not mentioned the subject to me, and I will undertake that she does not induce your son to act contrary to your wishes," answered Captain Askew.

"Very well, neighbour, I will trust to your word," said Mr Ludlow, in his usual supercilious manner, which, to a man of a temper less mild than the captain, would have been very galling. "I, of course, have other designs for him than to lead the life of a sailor."

When Mr Ludlow and Stephen had taken their departure, he could not help repeating to himself, "he may be alive on one of the many islands which stud parts of the Pacific. The sailor's story may be true, or it may be only dear Margery's fancy. It is but natural that she should indulge in it; I would that I had health and strength, and the means to go out and search for the dear boy—dear whether alive or dead."

That evening the captain spoke of their boy to his wife. He would not venture to raise her hopes. He scarcely hinted at the possibility of his having escaped from the wreck, and yet he spoke of such things having happened to others. Margaret's reply was, "God's will be done. He knows what is kept for us in all respects."

In the meantime, Stephen had told Margery that his father objected decidedly to his becoming a sailor, that he might go and look for her brother Jack; an announcement which the young lady received with much dignity, and an expression of contempt on her pretty countenance which it was not wont to wear.

"Of course, Mr Stephen Ludlow, you are right in doing what your father wishes," she observed; "and now I think over the matter you are not at all fitted to become a sailor. Sailors are true friends—generous, brave, kind, and liberal; I was mistaken when I supposed that you were likely to possess those qualities. Good-bye. I do not want to quarrel with you, but now you know what I think."

Margery was not aware how severe her words might have sounded. Stephen did not fully understand their meaning, but he felt very sheepish, and had an idea that it would probably be some time before he again paid a visit to Stormount Tower.

Margery had, however, far from abandoned her idea. She had for some time naturally thought that Charley Blount would be the proper person to perform her behests, and she felt certain that he would very gladly undertake the task she might assign him. She put the matter before him, and to her great delight he at once undertook her mission.

"I cannot say that your brother Jack is alive," he observed; "but this I promise, that if he is I will do my utmost to find him and bring him home."

Chapter Ten.

Charley goes to Sea—A Gallant Comrade—Coolness of Islanders—The Savages.

"May Heaven bless and prosper you, my boy!" said Captain Askew, as Charley Blount was prepared to start for Liverpool, where he expected to get a berth on board some ship bound for the shores of the Pacific. He had letters of introduction to Jack's old friend, now Captain Cumming, who resided at Birkenhead, on the other side of the Mersey, and to other friends of Captain Askew, so that his way would be likely to be made smooth.

His parting with the inmates of the Tower need not be fully described. Neither Mrs Askew nor Margery dared trust themselves with words. Becky gave him a hug, such as he was not accustomed to receive as she whispered, "Bring him back, Mr Charley, bring him back, oh do!"

"If the lad's above board you'll find him out, I know you will, Mr Charles," said old Tom, heartily wringing his hand. He modestly replied that he would do his best; and that, with a person of spirit and energy, signifies a good deal.

He was not going altogether without pecuniary means. Captain Askew had raised every shilling he could for the undertaking, and he felt sure that Captain Cumming would get friends at Liverpool to help him yet further. He soon reached that city, and when his object became known, although many declared that it was visionary, he had, from the liberality of merchants and others, ample supplies placed at his disposal, which he was to employ as he considered best. He without delay obtained a berth on board the *Southern Cross*, Captain Harper, as fourth mate, with the understanding that he should be allowed to quit

the ship after she had reached the coast of Peru, where she was to take a fresh cargo on board.

The *Southern Cross* was a well-found ship, Captain Harper, an upright man and a good seaman, and with the other officers and the crew, Charley was on his first acquaintance tolerably well pleased.

He enjoyed the sensation, which few but seamen can enjoy after some time spent on shore, when he once more trod the deck moved by the buoyant waves, as the good ship pursued her southward course over the Atlantic, and he thought of the enterprise in which he was engaged. Most of his shipmates, as many people on shore had done, thought his undertaking preposterous, and said that to search for a lad he had never seen, among the thousand and one isles of the Pacific, and who probably had been drowned, or eaten by the savages years ago, was more ridiculous than looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. Charley, however, kept, if not to his own opinion, to that which Margery, at all events, entertained, and got two young shipmates, midshipmen, to join him in it. Hugh Owen, an enthusiastic Welshman, and Edward Elton, a quiet and unpretending English lad who had been three years at sea. He was pale-faced and small of his age, his eyes were blue and his features regular, and in a crowd he would have been the last selected to do a daring deed; and yet no bolder or braver lad was to be found on board, and there was no act of heroism of which those who knew him would not have believed him capable.

Charley Blount was not much senior to either of the lads, but having been to sea longer, was their superior in rank. Off duty he treated them as equals, and the three young men soon formed a sincere friendship for each other.

The Falkland Islands were visited to obtain a supply of fresh provisions and water, and then the ship steered west round Cape Horn into the Pacific. Just, however, as that mighty headland was sighted there sprang up a fierce gale from the westward, which drove the *Southern Cross* back into the Atlantic, the huge billows rising up like mountains to bar her progress. But her captain well knew that perseverance alone could overcome this as it can conquer most difficulties, and she was kept under close-reefed sails, now with her head to the south, now to the north, ready to take advantage of any slant of wind which might enable her to work her way to the westward. The wind had fallen, and once more sail was made.

It was night, and Charley Blount had a watch on deck, when without warning down came the gale on the ship with greater fury than before. With a crack like a clap of thunder the main-topgallant-yard parted and hung by the lifts, dashing furiously against the topsail, and threatening to carry away the topmast. "It is my duty to clear that," exclaimed Charley, not waiting to be ordered or asked to go, for it was a task of the greatest peril, which only volunteers alone would be expected to attempt. Seizing an axe, he flew aloft.

"Heaven protect the bold fellow!" exclaimed the captain, who had hurried on deck.

Young Elton had also come, up from below. One part of the task was done when Charley's axe was torn from his grasp, and he was seized by the coils of a loose rope, lashing furiously, while the remaining part of the spar came whirling round his head. His terrific position could be seen from the deck, and the great danger any one would incur in going near him could be equally well perceived. Not a moment, however, did young Elton hesitate. Scarcely had the accident happened than he was flying up the ratlines amid the clouds of spray which drove across them. The ship was heeling over and pitching into the seas as if never to rise again, the masts were bending and straining, and the broken spar was flying round, now in one direction, now in the other, and threatening to render the brave young Elton's attempt useless, by hurling Charley Blount to destruction before he could release him, while the least want of vigilance would have proved equally fatal to himself. He had, amid the darkness of the night and the heeling of the ship to watch the movements of the threatening spar, and to dart forward as it receded and left a spot for an instant free from its attacks. His first aim was to release Charley, whom the rope was encircling every instant more closely in its deadly embrace. He watched his opportunity; he sprang along the yard, and with two blows of his axe the rope was severed, and Charley was released, and able to join him in the still more difficult task of clearing away the broken spar. Together they climbed the mast. "Stand from under!" was the cry, but there was no need of it. Again their sharp axes were at work; the spar fell clear of the ship into the foaming ocean, the topmast was saved, and loud cheers greeted the young seamen as they descended safely on deck.

This incident united Charley Blount and Elton in still closer friendship, and gained the support more completely of the enthusiastic Hugh Owen, who became now more than ever eager to follow their fortunes.

At length the ship got to the westward of the Cape, but she had been driven far to the south, and it was some time before the wind allowed her to steer a northerly course. She had already got into warm latitudes, when a high, cocoa-nut-covered, reef-bound island was discovered ahead. The savage character of the inhabitants of the isles of the Pacific had frequently been the subject of conversation on board, among those who had never before been in that part of the world, and it was naturally supposed that those living on the island in sight were deserving of the same description. As they coasted along, however, they could distinguish with their glasses numerous neat white buildings, and a wide extent of cultivated ground, and here and there towers and steeples, and edifices which had the appearance of ordinary school-houses; indeed, the land wore a wonderfully civilised aspect.

The captain, ordering the chief mate to keep the ship standing on and off, invited as many as two boats would contain to accompany him on shore. He carried an assortment of goods, not beads and looking-glasses and spear-heads, as would once have been the case, but cottons, and useful cutlery, and writing materials, and leather, and other articles in demand among civilised people. The boats arrived at a well-constructed wharf, where several decently-clothed natives stood ready to receive them. They were greeted with the salutation of "Blessings be on your head!" and one stepped forward and introduced himself as the trading-master, and requested to know what articles they wished to purchase. The captain gave a list of what he wanted, which were very soon brought down, and, the trade-master acting as interpreter, equitable bargains were soon struck, and all that was required by the voyagers was obtained at a reasonable rate. They were then allowed to visit any part of the island they chose with licensed guides. They expressed their surprise to the native interpreter at the state of things.

"Yes! great indeed is the change," he answered. "Thirty years ago we were among the most degraded of savages; but the good missionaries came, and though we would have driven them away, they persevered in remaining till they had taught us better things; and now you see us sitting clothed and in our right minds."

On inquiry, Charley found that there was not a heathen native in the whole island. There were churches always regularly attended, school houses, printing presses, lecture halls, a well-constituted government, and a perfectly educated native ministry. Not only were there no heathen, but, as far as human

discernment could discover, true Christian principles were professed and practised by a large majority of the population. Few islands were in a more satisfactory state than this one; at the same time Charley heard that the inhabitants of a very considerable number had become Christians by the instrumentality of English missionaries, and still more by that of Christian natives, eager to impart to their countrymen the glad tidings they had themselves received.

"It was to this island, many years ago, that a native missionary swam on shore with a few books, wrapped up in a cloth, on his head. Our savage fathers stood on the rocks with clubs and spears, ready to kill him, but his life was preserved by the mercy of God, who loved our souls though we knew Him not. At first no one would listen to what the missionary had to say, and laughed him to scorn; but by degrees one stopped to hear, and then another and another, and found what he said to be very good, till by degrees as they understood more clearly the tidings he brought, hundreds flocked in and believed, and were converted."

Captain Harper corroborated all Charley had heard, and stated that whereas once it was dangerous at most of the islands to land unless in a strong body, well armed; now, throughout the whole of the eastern groups, the inhabitants were as kind and courteous to strangers and as well conducted as any people he had met on the face of the globe. One day after they had left the island, the officers of a whaler becalmed near them came on board, and complained bitterly of the altered state of things, abusing the missionaries for being the cause of the change to which they so much objected.

The surgeon of the ship, who ought to have known better, was especially very indignant with them.

"Once we could go on shore, and for a few beads or a knife not worth twopence buy as many provisions as we required, or any other article, and we could play all sorts of pranks with the natives, and nobody interfered with us. Now, if we ask them to buy or sell, or to dance, or to do anything else on a Sunday, they won't do it, and we can have no fun of any sort; and they say that we have lost our religion, and pull long faces at us, and ask us all sorts of strange questions about our souls. As a fact, these savages know more about religion than we do; and they can write books, and print and bind them, and some of them can preach for an hour at a time; indeed, I don't know what they can't do. The missionaries have done it all—spoilt them, I say; they were jolly fellows as savages, but they are

desperately stupid now. To be sure, they did now and then murder a whole ship's company if they had the chance, and roast and eat them too, and they would steal anything they could lay hands on; and they were always fighting among each other; and they worshipped curious logs of wood and stumps of trees, and figures made out of rags, matting, and feathers; but we had nothing to do with that, it was rather fun to see them."

And so the surgeon of the whaler ran on, not at all aware that he was condemning himself and his companions, and their practices, and praising the long-benighted savages.

Charley observed that he could not help thinking that the change was for the better, and he could not help asking himself, "Where will the white man and where will the brown man be found standing at the day of judgment?"

He inquired of the doctor if he had heard of any young Englishman residing among the natives, or on any island in the eastern Pacific.

The doctor laughed, and said that there were a good many who had native wives, and were the prime ministers and privy councillors of the kings and princes who ruled the islands, especially those which still remained heathen.

Charley scarcely wished to find Margery's brother among these unhappy men. No! he was certain that if he was alive he was living on some unfrequented island, unable to get away. The *Southern Cross* touched at several islands, for the captain had a roving commission, to go where he thought best. At each of them Charley left on shore a number of cards on which he had written, "Jack Askew, a friend of your father's, Charley Blount, is looking for you. Send word to Callao, on the coast of Peru, and he will assist you to return home."

Captain Harper gave every assistance to Charley, but not a trace could they discover of the missing one. Two uninhabited islands had been visited; a third was sighted. Charley's heart beat high in anticipation of finding him whom he sought. Yet, why he expected to find Jack there more than at any other place he could not tell.

On the island, though it was a small one, there was a mountain and three or four lesser heights, which might prevent a person on the opposite side from seeing a ship; the captain, therefore, though he could not spare much time, agreed to sail partly round it, and to land Charley, Elton, Owen, and some of the

men, to explore it. They landed in high spirits, on a sandy beach, and pushed on to the highest point whence they could survey the whole island, and where a flag they carried could be seen by any inhabitant on it. They reached the summit of the mountain. There were valleys and rocks and cascades, and cocoa-nut and other tropical trees and plants; indeed it was very like the description of Robinson Crusoe's island. They waved the flag and shouted, though shouting was of no use, as no one in the valley could have heard them. At length they descended towards the east, the point from which the ship was to take them off. Still they hoped that some one might appear.

"He may have been all the time watching the ship, and not have looked up towards the mountain," observed Owen, who had assumed the fact of Jack's existence, even more than Charley himself. They reached the beach without meeting the trace even of a human being. All the party looked blank at each other; it was very clear that that was not Jack's island.

Disappointed they returned on board. "Don't let us despair," cried Charley. "There may be, in the latitude where the *True Love* was lost, fifty other islands, and Jack can only be in one of them, so that we cannot hope to find him in a hurry."

"No! of course not," cried Owen; "but we will find him notwithstanding that. Just let us get our little schooner fitted out and we'll visit every one of them, and twice as many if necessary."

Captain Harper had most liberally and kindly done his best for Charley's object. Captain Askew's friends at Liverpool had promised a reward of a hundred pounds to any man or ship's company, half to go to the master, who should discover and bring off young Askew, and half that amount for the discovery of any of the crew of the ill-fated ship. This information he gave to every whaler and other vessel the *Southern Cross* fell in with. Whalers especially, visit so many out-of-the-way spots while searching for their prey, to obtain wood and water and vegetables, essentials for the support of the health and life of the crew, that it was possible some of them might be tempted to make a more thorough examination of islands near which they might find themselves, than they would otherwise do. At length Callao was reached, and Charley with his two friends obtained their discharge.

The next thing was to find a vessel suited for their purpose. After inspecting a number, a beautiful little Spanish schooner, of about eighty tons, which had just come into the harbour, was

purchased, and a motley crew engaged. The crew consisted of one Englishman, who had been twenty years from home, a negro, a Tahitian, and a native Indian; but still they all pulled wonderfully well together. Charley Blount was captain; Elton, first mate; and Hugh Owen, second. The schooner had been called the *Boa Esperanza*, and so they called her the *Good Hope*—an appropriate name.

Never had a happier party put to sea. They were in prime health and spirits, and had a good object in view, so that they could venture to pray for the success of their expedition. They had an ample crew for the size of the vessel; she was well-found, and sailed like a witch, and was altogether a first-rate little craft.

The *Good Hope* went out of harbour at the same time as the *Southern Cross*, the latter steering south on her homeward voyage, the former west, to explore all the islands known and unknown in that direction. Charley had given his utmost attention to navigation since he left England, and from the time Elton and Owen had agreed to accompany him, they had also studied the subject more carefully than before. They were, therefore, all three very fair navigators; indeed a good knowledge of navigation was very necessary for the work in which they were about to engage.

Away went the *Good Hope* on her adventurous and perilous voyage. The Pacific, though often calm, shows that it does not deserve its name at all times. After they had been a week out, the weather gave signs of changing: dark clouds appeared in the west, though the wind was still blowing from the east. They continued their course to reach an island which rose high out of the sea ahead. With the fair wind they then had they rapidly neared the island. Their glasses showed them that it was a beautiful spot, very like the island they had before visited, but larger. Just, however, as they got abreast of it, the gale, which had for some time been brewing, broke on them with great fury. Fortunately they were able to run back for shelter under the lee of the island, where, though they still felt the wind, the sea was comparatively smooth. Great vigilance was, at the same time, necessary, lest the wind changing suddenly she might be driven on the reefs which surrounded the island. Still they kept as close as they could, looking out for an opening through which they might pass and anchor inside.

Hugh Owen had a remarkably sharp pair of eyes, and was the first to espy, some way to the northward, a space of clear water with a sheltered bay beyond. The schooner was steered towards the spot. Owen was right. A slant of wind enabled them to stand

through the passage. The sea dashed in foam over the coral reefs on either hand; careless steering, the parting of a rope, or a sudden change of wind would have hurled them to destruction. The dangers were passed, and she rode safely in a little bay, which had a sandy beach, and a fringe of rocks and trees above. No huts or dwelling-places could be seen, yet it seemed scarcely possible that so fine an island should be uninhabited. Still people might exist on the other side of the island, or more inland.

They had been advised not to venture on shore on any island, unless the inhabitants had become Christians, without arms. Owen and Elton proposed on this occasion going without them, as they were heavy to carry.

"No, no!" said Charley. "A rule is a rule, which, if a good one, should never be broken through."

This was the first island where, by their calculations, they had the slightest chance of finding Jack Askew, at least, it was about the longitude that the *True Love* was supposed to have been lost.

Owen took charge of the schooner while Charley and Elton and three men went on shore, all sufficiently armed with rifles, pistols in their belts, and cutlasses by their sides. They hoped by starting early in the day to accomplish the tour of the island before dark. Having drawn up their boat on the beach, they pushed on for the highest point of land in the neighbourhood. On reaching it they saw in the valley below, on the further side, wreaths of smoke ascending from among a grove of trees. Charley and Elton agreed that there must be inhabitants, but wisely determined not to approach them without first ascertaining, if possible, their disposition. They therefore continued along the height, so as to avoid the valley, proposing to cross over by a route which appeared open to the opposite side of the island.

As they advanced they saw more signs of the island being inhabited: tracks leading in various directions, ruined huts, and marks of fires and native ovens. Some natives were also seen in the distance, but whether or not they were observed they could not tell. Charley and Elton speculated as they went on as to the probability of Jack being on the island. Wherever they went, in all conspicuous places they left the cards, with a notice that the schooner, on the east side of the island, was waiting for him, hoping that possibly he might see one of them, should they themselves miss him.

At length they reached the west side of the island, where the full strength of the gale was felt, and they were thankful that their vessel lay snugly in harbour, and sheltered from its fury. Here they found a group of huts and patches of cultivated ground, for the production of the taro root, but the inhabitants had hastily fled. This was unsatisfactory, as they must have had cause to dread the appearance of white men. They saw, therefore, that it would be prudent to return by the most direct route to the bay, where it would be safer to attempt establishing friendly relations with them; for should they fail, unless they could fight their way, they would probably be cut off. Keeping close together, they therefore marched rapidly westward.

Several times they saw natives armed with bows, spears, and clubs, hovering on either side, but none of them came within speaking distance. They seemed to increase in numbers as the party approached the bay, and Charley felt thankful when they came in sight of the schooner. Their first care was to get the boat afloat, that they might retreat if necessary. They had brought a number of useful articles for barter—knives and pieces of cotton cloth, and handkerchiefs, and nails, and some of them they placed on the rocks, beckoning the natives with friendly gestures to approach and take them. No sooner had Charley and his party retired to the boat, than nearly forty savages started up from behind the rocks and rushed towards the goods, eagerly seizing them, and as quickly retreating again under shelter. After this, nothing could tempt the savages from their cover. One thing was certain, that Jack could not be on the island, or the savages would have learned to treat white men in a different manner. Charley, therefore, determined to return to the schooner. No sooner, however, had his men begun to shove off the boat, than the savages, fearing to lose the treasures they possessed, made a furious rush in a body towards her, flourishing their war-clubs, and holding their spears ready to throw.

“Shove off, lads, shove off, for your lives!” cried Charley, seizing an oar. “Let not a shot be fired unless I give the word.”

The savages, however, seeing that their expected prize was about to escape them, rushed on with greater speed, some hurling their spears, others, with clubs uplifted, threatening the destruction of all in the boat.

Chapter Eleven.

The Right Way to treat Savages—The Missionary and his Converts—The Boy on the Island.

Charley Blount's great wish was to avoid injuring any of the natives. In spite, therefore, of the spears which came flying around him, and the array of warriors with their war-clubs, he refrained from firing, and directed all his efforts to get the boat completely afloat. Just as a savage had got one hand on the stern and with the other was about to deal a blow with his club which would have killed Charley, the boat glided off into deep water, and the savage warrior toppled down with his nose in the surf. He was up again in a moment, but blinded by the salt water, and not seeing that the boat had escaped him, struck out with his club and again fell over as before, and would possibly have been drowned, had not some of his companions hauled him up and set him again on his legs. This circumstance assisted the escape of the boat, which was now getting away from the shore. Charley, anxious not to injure any of the savages, had ordered his men not to fire till the last extremity. Not a shot therefore was fired, and the boat got well off out of danger.

The question was now, how to show the savages that the white men possessed power, but had mercifully not employed it against them. They had on board an empty cask, in which some of the articles left with the savages had been brought off. This was ballasted and put in the water with a short flag-staff, and a handkerchief as a flag fixed in it. Pulling away a short distance Elton and Charley, and one of the men, who was a good shot, repeatedly fired and hit it, till at last the flag and staff were shot away to the astonishment of the natives, who stood looking on. Fortunately, a tree grew near the beach on one side, where there were no natives. Charley next made this his target, and the white splinters which flew out on either side must have convinced the savages that the missiles which produced them would have made, with greater ease very disagreeable holes in their bodies. Charley now once more pulled in towards the beach; the savages ran off. He had a few more articles left; he landed, spread them out, and then, returning to the boat, beckoned to the people to come and take them.

At length they seemed to comprehend his humane intentions, for several of them, leaving their clubs and spears on the bank above, approached the water, holding out their hands as if to welcome the strangers. Charley, on seeing this, telling Elton to

be ready to support him if necessary, leaped boldly on shore, and advanced with extended hands towards the savages. They understood him, and now seemed to have banished their fears, and to have no treacherous intentions.

His first object gained, he endeavoured to make them understand that he was looking for one of his own countrymen. By signs he showed how a vessel had been wrecked, and that two of the people had swam on shore, and how he was looking for them; but they shook their heads, and he felt certain that this was not the island where Jack was to be found. While he was speaking several of the people brought down cocoa-nuts, plantains, taro, and other roots and fruits in baskets, as a proof of their friendly feelings, and showing, also, that they knew what the wants of white men were. How different, however, would have been the conclusion of the intercourse with these people, if the schooner's crew had fired on the first alarm, and the blood of the poor savages been shed?

The *Good Hope* laid at anchor for two days, when, the gale abating, she again sailed. There was still a good deal of sea, but as Captain Blount found that he could lay his course, he was unwilling to delay any longer, and, like most sailors, he believed that his craft could do anything. He ought before to have been called captain, though it must be owned that he was rather a young one, and captain of a somewhat small craft. He and his companions regretted that they had not brought an interpreter with them, that they might communicate without difficulty with the natives.

"We might have obtained some information from the poor savages we last visited about other islands lying to the westward," observed the captain; "I suspect, too, that they would have had to tell us, that some former visitors had taken them unawares and killed some of them, and so they had thought all white men were enemies, and had determined to kill the next they could get in their power."

"Yes, indeed," said Elton, "how different these are from the inhabitants of the first island we visited; I have been thinking that I should like to tell some of their missionaries of these poor people, and get them to send one of their number to instruct them."

"What, do you think that you could hope to make Christians out of such naked savages as those are?" exclaimed Hugh Owen, who had not turned his mind to the subject.

"Of course; those well-behaved, well-clothed people we saw, were quite as wild and ignorant as the naked savages we have just left, but a very few years ago. Not fifty years since there was not an island in the wide Pacific which had risen out of a state of the most complete savagedom. Now, in the eastern part of the ocean, whole groups have embraced Christianity. The Sandwich Islands are rapidly advancing in civilisation, and King George of Tonga, himself a man of much talent, though once a savage, ruled over a large population of enlightened men, a large number of whom possess a better knowledge of the Scriptures, and would be able to give better reasons for the faith that is in them than would nine-tenths of the population of any country in Europe, England not excepted."

"Who told you that?" asked Owen; "I have heard a very different account."

"I heard it from my late captain, who spent three years cruising among the islands of all parts of the Pacific," answered Elton. "Captain Harper, too, said the same thing, and neither of them can be accused of being in the interest of the missionaries."

"Certainly not; I fully believe the facts," exclaimed Charley. "If I had not undertaken to carry Jack back to his family, I should like to volunteer to convey missionaries to all these islands. I could not wish for a better employment for the little schooner or for myself."

"The very thought that was in my head," said Elton. "When our present enterprise is accomplished, I will offer my services for the work. I think that a sailor could scarcely be engaged in a better."

Faithfully did young Elton keep his promise.

Just then the man on the look-out exclaimed that he saw an object floating on the water ahead, but what it was he could not make out. As the schooner got nearer, the object was pronounced to be a raft, and to have living people on it. On getting still nearer, it was seen to be not a raft, but one of the double canoes of those seas, which consist of two canoes joined together by a platform. This platform extends across the entire width of both canoes and the greater part of their length. Several people were on the deck. Some were kneeling, one was standing up, and others were lying at their length, their heads propped up, as if in a state of exhaustion. As the schooner hove-to close to them, those on board her were startled by

hearing, among sounds strange to their ears, the name of Jehovah clearly pronounced.

The people were dark-skinned, undoubtedly natives, though clothed in garments, either of native cloth or cotton, several of them wearing hats. They, however, it was evident, did not regard the appearance of the schooner with satisfaction, and several of them hung down their heads with apprehension at seeing her. As there was still too much sea to allow of the schooner going alongside of the canoe, a boat was lowered, and Elton and two men pulled up to her.

"We are friends; we, too, worship Jehovah," he shouted, holding up his hands as if in prayer. In an instant the aspect of the whole changed. Those who had been hanging down their heads lifted them up with a smile on their countenances, and the man who was standing in the midst of them exclaimed in return, "Yes, yes; friends—all who worship Jehovah are our friends!"

Elton was soon on board the canoe. The condition of the crew was truly piteous. Their last drop of water was exhausted—their last taro-root—their last cocoa-nut,—yet they were not desponding. They had done their utmost: they had prayed earnestly for deliverance, and were calmly waiting the result. Their canoe was in so battered a condition, that before Elton asked them any questions he advised that they should remove at once on board the schooner. Though only one of them spoke a little English, several of them understood what he said. They gladly assented to his proposal, begging him to take the most feeble first. These were quickly conveyed to the deck of the schooner, where Charley and Owen were ready with food and water to administer to them.

It took several trips before they were all safely placed on board the schooner, and, not long after the last party left the canoe, she slowly settled down to her platform, from which all on it would soon have been washed away, even with the sea there was then running.

When the whole party had been carefully attended to, Charley inquired by what means they had been brought into the condition in which they had been found. The chief man among them answered in broken but still intelligible English, that he was a native missionary, that he and his companions, two of whom were catechists and one a schoolmaster, had started to visit an island to the westward, which they had expected to reach in a couple of days, but that they were caught in a gale, and their mast and sail being carried away they were driven

past it, and onward before the gale utterly unable to return, or even to stop their frail vessel.

Day after day they had been driven on, anxiously looking out for reefs ahead, knowing that if driven on one, their canoe must be dashed to pieces. Their rudder and oars had been lost, so that they had no power of directing their vessel. Several islands were passed on which they might have landed if they had had their paddles to guide the canoe to the shore. "One of them," said the missionary, "we passed so close, that we could clearly see a man on shore. It was a small low coral island, with a lagoon, or lake in the centre, and cocoa-nuts and other trees growing round it. By his dress and appearance we judged the man to be a white. We also saw a hut of some size built under the trees. He waved his hands wildly, as if entreating us to take him off, and seemed to be shouting, and then he went down on his knees and lifted up his hands, as if imploring mercy. Helpless ourselves, we could render him no aid."

"That must have been Jack!" cried Charley and his two friends in the same breath. "If we had not heard this, we might easily have overlooked such a spot. We might have run past it at night, or within ten miles, and not have seen it. What a dull and solitary life the poor fellow must have dragged out in such a place."

"If a man's mind is at peace, and he can converse with his God, he need not be sad or solitary," observed the missionary, calmly.

The young men then inquired how far off he should suppose the island to be.

The missionary answered that they had passed it about ten days before; that at that time they had been driving very fast before the gale, but after it had abated, much slower. So eager were Charley and his friends to follow up their search, that they debated whether or not they should continue their course to the west, and look for the island which had been described.

Elton was opposed to this while they had so many strangers on board. "No, no," he exclaimed; "do not let us be carried away by our zeal in the cause of our lost countryman; we have another duty to perform. We were but lately wishing that we could send a missionary to the ignorant inhabitants of the island we have lately left. Here is one presented to us—a man in every way fitted for the work. Let us put the matter before him."

They did so. Directly the missionary had heard the account they gave of the wild islanders, he, without hesitation, expressed his readiness to go among them, and said he was sure that all his companions would be ready to join him in the work. He was not mistaken in the zeal of his friends, "When souls are to be saved, and the glorious tidings of salvation to sinners to be conveyed, we are ready to go," they answered.

The schooner was therefore at once put about, and a course at once steered for the island. They were all curious to see how the wild natives would take their speedy return, and whether the missionary would be able to communicate with them, though he seemed to have no doubt on the subject. The next day the schooner dropped her anchor in the sheltered bay she had lately left. The natives were seen assembling from all quarters, and soon a large number collected on the beach.

Charley and Elton, Mark, the missionary,—for so he was called—and two other natives, went in the boat. Instead of pulling at once for the beach, the missionary begged to be landed at a point where some trees grew. From these he cut down some branches and distributed them among the party, when the boat was steered in for the place where the natives were collected. The branches were waved as the boat approached the beach, when the natives were seen cutting down branches and waving them in return. "It's all right," exclaimed the missionary, in a cheerful voice; "we shall be friends."

He then shouted to the natives, who replied in the same language; and without landing, as the stem touched the sand, he began an address, which appeared from his tones to be full of eloquence. They listened to it with profound attention, and then several of them stretched out their hands, and gave indubitable signs that they were eager to welcome him on shore. He and his companions accordingly landed, and were surrounded by the natives, who appeared as eager to listen as before. Captain Blount determined, however, to remain till the following day, as he had heard that these island savages were seldom to be trusted, and that, though they might appear friendly at one time, the next instant they might turn round and destroy those who had trusted them.

The night was an anxious one to Charley and his friends, as well as to the natives on board; but the next morning, when they went on shore, Mark gave so good a report of the islanders, that the whole of the strangers agreed to land and remain. Mark, however, recommended one young man, who understood English, though he could not speak it, to continue on board the

Good Hope, that he might tell the natives of any islands they might visit who the strangers were, and also to assist in discovering the small coral island where the solitary white man had been seen. Captain Blount gladly accepted the offer.

"Tell my friends," said Mark, "that we have begun the work, but some years may pass away before all the inhabitants of even this small island understand the Glad Tidings, which they at present appear to receive so readily. When the work is accomplished, then I may return home."

Charley found that Mark, who was thus ready to devote himself to the work of the Gospel, was the son of a powerful chief or prince, and that he had thus literally given up much and all for its sake.

Both officers and men of the *Good Hope* had enough to do in keeping a proper look-out ahead for the numerous dangers in their course. Those who have only sailed in seas navigated for centuries with excellent charts of every rock, shoal, and current, are scarcely aware of the anxiety those experience who have to sail across an unknown ocean where numberless small islands exist, and reefs, some under the water and some just above it, on which the incautious voyager may run his ship and lose her, with little or no warning. At night, except when there was a moon, the schooner was hove-to, lest she should run on a reef, or past Jack's supposed island. The native, who said that his name was Peter, was as eager as any one, and was constantly aloft looking out for it.

Such an island as it was described might very easily be passed by without being observed. Charley, Elton, Owen, or Peter was therefore always on the look-out, for they would not trust one of the crew. Their difficulty was increased by a foul wind which sprung up from the westward, and compelled them to tack across their course. This greatly increased the distance they had to go over, and completely baffled Peter's calculations.

One night, having stood farther than before to the northward, a bright light was seen in the distance, which was pronounced by all on board to be a ship on fire. Sad must be the fate of all on board if no assistance arrived! Making all sail, they stood towards the spot. The red glare increased, the reflection extending over the whole sky. While they looked, expecting every instant to see the supposed ship blow up or the light suddenly cease by her sinking, Charley exclaimed that it was a burning mountain. His companions doubted the fact. Still they thought that it was a burning ship; the light was decreasing—

again it blazed up. The sky over head appeared peculiarly dark. "Hillo! what is this coming down on us?" exclaimed Owen.

They felt the tops of their caps—they and the deck were gritty. It was a shower of ashes; the mystery was explained; the light was that of a burning mountain. As there was no object to be gained in going nearer to it, and Peter gave them to understand that he had not seen it when on board the canoe, they tacked and stood to the southward. More than once Charley thought of the remark people had made to him, that his expedition was like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. "Never mind," he repeated; "if the needle is in the bundle, by diligent searching it may be found. A solitary white man has been seen on an island, we must first find out who he is."

The wind baffled them frequently, but still they perseveringly plied to windward, though next night they were again in sight of the burning mountain, which was to the north-east of the schooner, showing that they had made but little way to the west. Once more the wind turned in their favour, and they rejoiced that they were able to make better way than they had done for a long time. It was getting dusk, but at sunset no land had been seen ahead, and, eager to get on, they continued their course without shortening sail. Suddenly, Owen, who was forward on the look-out, shouted at the top of his voice, "Breakers ahead! Starboard! Down with the helm! Haul aft the sheets! For your lives be smart about it!" All hands flew to the sheets. The little vessel came up to the wind, and turned aside from the danger with a rapidity no larger one could have accomplished; but, even as it was, as she went about the white spray was seen dancing up in the darkness close under her counter, while beyond was a mass of foaming-breakers, among which had they been thrown, in vain would they have struggled for their lives, their career would quickly have been over.

Owen confessed afterwards that he was very weary, that he was fully under the impression that he was keeping a very bright look-out, and that certainly his eyes were wide open, but that it was on a sudden he became aware, from hearing some unusual sound, that breakers were dancing up directly ahead of the schooner. In another minute her doom would have been sealed.

Thankful for their merciful preservation, they agreed that at night two people should be on the look-out, and that they should be relieved every hour. The appearance of the reef made it probable that they were in the neighbourhood of other reefs and low coral islands, and they anxiously waited for daylight in

anticipation of discovering the particular island of which they were in search. Standing to the south they cleared the reef, and once more, having shortened sail, they stood on their course.

The sun was just rising, a vast globe of fire, out of the purple ocean, when Elton, who had gone aloft, shouted, "Land! land! A low island, with palm-trees on it!" One after another, everybody on board went aloft to look at the long-wished for island. Peter came nodding his head, with a pleased smile, exclaiming, "Dat is land! dat is land!" for he had already learned some words of English.

The island, as the schooner drew near it, appeared to be of an oval form, under a mile in length and half that in width, with a large lagoon in the centre, having one entrance from the southern end and an outer reef, on which the surf broke, curling upwards like a wall of snow, and then falling back in wreaths of foam; the outer reef thus saving the islet from being overwhelmed during every gale of wind which raged. Inside the reef, the water was calm as a mirror and of the deepest blue; then came a line of glittering white sand, and then a circle of green of the brightest emerald, surrounding a basin of water even of a deeper blue than that on the outside.

Carefully the schooner approached; frequently she hove-to and sounded, but no bottom was to be found, and consequently there was little hope of her being able to anchor. She stood closer and closer in; with their glasses the adventurers examined the island in every part, but no one was seen moving. Still Peter insisted that it was the island on which the white man had been seen; indeed, he pointed out what certainly appeared to be a hut under the trees. The only way to ascertain whether the man was still there was to land, and that was a work of some difficulty. The boat, fitted with empty casks and pieces of cork round her sides to serve as a lifeboat, was lowered; the captain steered, Elton and three other men rowed. A narrow space of clear water presented itself through the surf: "Give way! give way!" cried Charley, and they dashed on, the water foaming and leaping up on either side, and they were safe within the outer reef.

The safest landing was within the lagoon. As they pulled up to it and looked over the sides of the boat, so pure and transparent was the water that they could see down to the very bottom, and beautiful indeed was the sight they beheld. Masses of varied coloured coral, sea-plants of every conceivable tint and of the brightest shells—some with their living inhabitants, others deserted—of the most lovely forms, while fish of curious shapes

and beautiful colours glided noiselessly in and out amid the rocks and groves of this submarine fairy land.

Charley, however, was thinking of Jack, and was eager to land to ascertain whether he was really an inhabitant of the islet, or whether they had yet further to continue their search. The whole party was soon on shore, and hurrying up towards the spot where they expected to find the hut.

"Jack Askew! Jack Askew! are you there?" cried Charley, thinking that this was the best way to bring out the inhabitant of the hut should there be one, but there was no reply. "Alas!" he said to himself, "I am afraid that we have come too late to save him. Dear Margery, how bitter will be her disappointment; how it will grieve the hearts of the good old captain and Mrs Askew to hear it!"

And Charley walked on in silence towards the hut, which just then appeared between the cocoa-nut trees.

Chapter Twelve.

Jack Askew found—His Adventures.

Was the hut deserted, or was the person whom Peter had seen waving his hands as the canoe drove past still its occupant? The hut was rudely built, partly of pieces of coral but chiefly of drift-wood, and thatched with the broad leaves of the pandanus, a species of palm growing on the island. Charley entered:—yes, it was inhabited. On a rough bed of dried leaves lay a young man; his cheeks were pale and hollow, his eyes sunken, but he breathed. "Water, water," he muttered; "oh mercy, water!"

Happily, Charley had brought a flask with some weak brandy-and-water; he poured a few drops down the sufferer's throat, while the men dispersed to try to find water on the island. Charley repeated his remedy, and by the time the water was found the sufferer was able to sit up long enough to take a refreshing draught of it. He looked around him with a surprised and bewildered air. "Who are you all?" he asked at length, in a low voice. "Where do you come from? I thought that I was left alone to die."

"Friends and countrymen; but don't speak," answered Charley, for though he was burning to learn if the sufferer was Jack

Askew, he saw that he was in so weak a state from famine and sickness that any agitation might prove fatal. Suppressing therefore his curiosity, his great wish was to get him on board the *Good Hope*, where such food as was best fitted for his weak state could be procured. Still it seemed very important to give him some hot food before an attempt was made to remove him.

"I will manage it," exclaimed Elton, producing a calabash. "Let us get a fire lighted first, and see if any shell-fish or crabs, or perhaps even a young turtle may be found; I will make some soup, and though it may be blackish, it will not be the less wholesome."

As soon as the fire was lighted, while the men went to search for the fish, Elton collected a number of clean rounded stones from the beach and placed them in the midst of it. He then half-filled the calabash with water, into which, by means of a cleft stick which served the purpose of tongs, he put the red hot stones, and quickly made the water boil. By the time this was done the men returned with a very respectable sized turtle, which they had caught in a pool, into which he had been unwittingly washed. Some strips were immediately cut off him and put into the boiling pot. As soon as their goodness was supposed to be extracted, they and the stones were taken out with the cleft stick, and hotter stones and fresh strips put in. In a very short time a thick and nutritious soup was formed, which, though it would have been improved with salt, pepper, lemon, and a few other condiments, was well calculated to restore the vital energies, aided with small doses of brandy-and-water. Such, at all events, were the only means that Charley and Elton could think of for giving the sufferer the strength he required. Whether or not the turtle soup would have served the purpose without the spirit, or the spirit without the soup, it may be difficult to determine; at all events, the two combined had a most beneficial effect.

In the course of two or three hours he was able to sit up of his own accord, and then, gazing earnestly at those surrounding him, he asked, "What made you come to look for me? I have watched several ships pass, but no one saw me; no one thought that on this little island there was a human being longing to be at home with his friends, who must have long thought him dead, perhaps forgotten him altogether."

Charley saw that now was the time to speak, and that if the stranger should prove to be Jack Askew, the news he brought would do him good. "But, my friend, do you think that a fond mother so easily forgets her sailor son?—do you think a young

loving sister forgets her brother?—do you suppose that an old sailor father does not know that a person may be cast on shore on a desert island in these little-known seas, and remain for years undiscovered?”

“Why do you ask those questions?” asked the lad, leaning forward with earnest eyes, and eagerly seizing Charley’s arm—“How do you know that I have a sailor father, a fond mother, and a young sister?”

“If you are Jack Askew I know it very well, for your parents and dear little sister Margery have never ceased to think of you,” answered Charley.

“I am! I am!” exclaimed the lad, throwing his arms round Charley’s neck. “You tell me that they are alive still, father and mother, and Margery—dear, dear Margery! And are they well?—do they ever expect to see me?—can they believe that I am alive? All you tell me nearly turns my head with joy, but it won’t kill me; I must live to go back to them.”

Charley assured Jack that all were well, and that the only drawback to their happiness was his absence.

“And Margery! dear, dear little Margery; you must tell me all about her,” exclaimed Jack, after a lengthened pause. “Is she grown?—is she as fair and bright and beautiful as she was? You don’t know how I loved that little girl. I have often dreamed of her as an angel coming to look for me and take me home; and I have thought that she was flying away with me, holding my hand, over the sea and over the land; and oh, how bitter was the disappointment when I awoke and found that I was alone.”

“You see, Jack, that she was constantly praying for you, and going in spirit to look for you, and her prayers were heard in heaven, as I am sure that sincere prayers, rightly prayed, are heard,” observed Charley. “But you must not talk any more just now; have a little more soup, and go to sleep, if you can, for a short time, and then we will go on board.”

“Thank you; you are very kind indeed, quite like a brother; and I want to know more about you—who you are, and why you came to look for me?” said Jack.

“Time enough for that when we get on board,” answered Charley; “we have a somewhat long voyage before us, and it will be well to keep something in store to talk about.”

Jack made no reply, he was indeed too weary to speak. Charley even now, as he watched over him, felt far from sure that he would ultimately recover, he was so thin and wan, and when he slept he looked more like a dead person than one alive.

Two or three anxious hours passed away, and every moment, as Charley watched the poor lad, he dreaded to see him heave his last sigh; but the food he had swallowed began to take effect permanently on his system—a slight colour spread slowly over his cheeks, his breathing became more regular, and when he awoke there was a brightness in his eye and a cheerfulness in his voice which Charley had not before observed. He wished that they could remain some days longer on the island, that Jack might regain more strength before going on board; but the weather was uncertain, and a gale might spring up and drive the schooner off, or perhaps wreck her; and, besides this, Jack entreated that he might be taken on board, and that no time might be lost in commencing their homeward voyage.

Hugh Owen was feeling somewhat anxious at the long delay of the boat, and was standing close in shore with the schooner to look for her, when she emerged from the passage through the reefs. His delight at seeing Jack was very great, and he declared that he could scarcely believe his senses when he found that what they had been so long talking about had really come true. By standing to the south they should be able to touch at one of the Harvey or Society Island groups, where they were certain of a hospitable reception, and of obtaining such provisions as they might require.

To refit the schooner properly, and to obtain stores for their long voyage home, it would be necessary to touch at Valparaiso, or some other port on the coast of Chili. It was a satisfaction to feel that wherever they touched among the groups of islands which have been mentioned, they would find civilised men and Christians ready to welcome them as friends, instead of as formerly savages, who would have taken every opportunity of murdering them and plundering their vessel. Still, as the noble-hearted Elton observed, as they looked over the chart of the Pacific and noted the numberless islands which dotted it in often thick-clustering groups, there must still exist a great deal of work to be done, and that he trusted to be able to engage in doing it.

Some days passed before Jack was able to speak much, and even then not beyond a whisper, or to listen to the account Charley had to give him of his expedition, and the way it had been brought about. Then, of course, he also wanted to hear of

the doings at Stormount Tower, and how Margery had been carried off by the smugglers, and how Charley and Tom had recovered her. "Tom, dear old Tom, how I shall like to wring his horny fist again; it's as honest a palm as any in England!" cried Jack. "And you, Charley, what a fine fellow you are; I don't like to talk of giving Margery to any one, but I would rather give her to you, when the time comes, than to anybody else in the world; and I suspect that she wouldn't say nay if she was asked."

Charley said that he hoped so, and turned the conversation.

And now Jack was asked to narrate his own adventures, for hitherto the subject had been avoided, and he seemed in no way inclined to allude to it.

"It has been a terrible time indeed, as you may guess," he observed; "but now that it is over, I ought to think of it with gratitude to the good God who has preserved me safe through all my dangers. You know how I sailed in the *Truelove* with Captain Summers, and how, after touching at Callao, we steered westward, to visit various islands on our way to Japan. We were in high spirits, for we thought nothing of the dangers of the voyage, and only of seeing so many beautiful and strange islands and their inhabitants. A good look-out was always supposed to be kept ahead, and we were running one night, in the first watch, believing that the whole of our voyage would be as prosperous as the commencement, when the cry arose, 'Breakers ahead! Breakers on the starboard bow!' followed by 'Breakers on the port bow!' The helm was put down, the sheets hauled flat, but before the ship could by any possibility come about, she struck—then forged ahead, to strike again more heavily.

"Directly every one on board knew that there was not the slightest hope of saving the ship, scarcely of escaping with our lives. We had a long night before us, and the wind was increasing. The order was given to lower the boats, but two were swamped and the hands in them carried away. We heard their shrieks, but could not help them; besides, we knew that their fate would soon probably be ours. Then the sea began to beat over the ship, and soon made a clean breach across the waist, washing away the captain and the first mate and several more of the men. Just then a bright light burst forth to the north-east; two or three of the men who were clinging to the taffrail with me thought that it was a ship on fire, but after watching it for some minutes we became convinced that it was a burning mountain. We argued that if there was a mountain

there was land; and I had heard that such lands were generally the most fertile, and so we hoped that if we could reach it we should find support.

"There was a light burning in the cabin, and the captain's supper was on the table; I managed to reach the companion-hatch, and slipped down below. I quickly snatched up whatever provisions I could find—a compass, a quadrant, and navigation book, and returned with them on deck. A small boat hung astern; two of the men, David King and another, agreed to lower her, for the water astern appeared occasionally to be comparatively smooth, and we fancied that she might swim where a larger boat might be swamped; at all events, we believed that the ship was about to break up, and that this would be the only chance of saving our lives. There was no time to be lost; we put everything necessary we could find into the boat, and, jumping in, lowered her down. As she touched the water, the other man, crying out that we should be swamped, swarmed up the falls, and in an instant King and I were carried far away from the ship. I thought his words would come true, but we were driven on right through the surf, and once more floated in smooth water.

"What would happen next we could not tell, so we lay on our oars, waiting till daylight. It was very long of coming; we thought that it never would come—at least that we should never see it. When it broke, we could no longer see the burning mountain, nor any land in that direction; nor could we have reached it had we seen it, for the wind was blowing strong from the quarter in which the light had appeared. Still more anxiously we looked for the ship; not a portion of her remained entire, but the numerous pieces of wreck which floated about near us, told us plainly what had become of her and our shipmates. We looked about, hoping that some of them might be floating on bits of the wreck, but no living being was to be seen. In the distance we observed the bodies of two poor fellows; we pulled up to them, knowing from the first that they were dead; they were those of two men who had been holding on to the ship when we left her.

"It would not do to remain where we were, and as we could not sail in the direction we proposed, we agreed to run before the wind till we could fall in with some island on which we could land. For four anxious days we ran on, till some palm-trees appeared ahead rising out of the water, and we knew that we were approaching a coral island. The wind had happily fallen, but the surf ahead showed us our danger in time, and putting down

our helm we stood to the southward till we came to the end of the island; keeping away again we found a passage through the reef, by which we safely entered the lagoon.

"Here, for the present, we were safe from the dangers of the sea; the island was uninhabited, and we found a spring of water, but provisions were not likely to be plentiful. There were cocoa-nuts for one part of the year, and turtle and their eggs occasionally, and roots and shell-fish; and after a time it occurred to King that we might be able to catch some fish. Having walked round and round the island, or rather, almost round and back again, and considered how we should procure food, our next care was to build a hut to shelter ourselves from the sun by day, and the dews by night.

"And now commenced a solitary life, the end of which we could not see. Years might go by before a vessel might pass that way, and if one should pass, what little chance was there of our being seen! Still, I do not think a day went by without our talking on the subject, and looking out for a sail. King, poor fellow, was not much of a companion, as we had few ideas in common; but we never grew tired of talking of the probability of our getting away. He had a wife and family in England whom he longed to see, as much as I did my friends. How many months or years went by while he was with me I could not tell, for our life was a very monotonous one.

"We had kept our boat in as good repair as possible, not with the hope of making our escape in her, for she was too small for that, but for the purpose of putting off to get on board any ship which might appear. We were, therefore, chary of using her, but occasionally we went out fishing in her, when the supply we could get in the lagoon or from the shore ran short. One day I was ill, and King said that he would go out by himself. I warned him not to go, for from the appearance of the sky I thought bad weather was coming on. He laughed at my fears, said that he would bring me back a good dinner, and rowed round to the eastward of the island.

"He had not been gone long before my prognostications were verified; the wind began to rise. I went to the beach and beckoned him to return, but he was busy hauling up fish and did not see me, or observe the altered state of the weather; I shouted, but my voice did not reach him. He had already drifted out farther than usual; suddenly the movement of the boat as she got into rough water made him look up. By some carelessness one of his oars slipped overboard, and before he could recover it the squall had caught the boat, and whirling it

round had sent her far from it. I saw his frantic gestures as he endeavoured to scull the boat back toward the island. Now he tried to paddle her with his remaining oar as an Indian does a canoe, but in vain. Every instant the gale was increasing and driving her farther and farther away.

"I watched her with a sinking heart growing less and less to my sight, till she was lost among the foaming seas in the distance. I then for the first time felt with full force my lonely position; I wrung my hands like a child; I burst into tears; I bemoaned my hard fate, and thought that I was forsaken of God and man. Not only was my companion taken from me, but the only means that I saw by which I could effect my escape. He might possibly reach some other shore; I should never leave that on which I was drawing out my weary existence. I see now, from what you tell me, how short-sighted I was; that our kind Father in heaven chooses His own way in carrying out plans for our benefit, and that what I thought was my ruin would ultimately prove the means of my rescue.

"For several days after King had gone I could neither eat nor sleep, or if I slept I dreamed that I saw him floating away, and tried to follow and could not. By degrees I recovered a portion of my tranquillity. Still I watched more eagerly for any passing ship. It might have been nearly a year afterwards, one morning as I arose a sail hove in sight. My heart leaped within me: I thought in my folly that those on board were coming to look for me. Oh how eagerly I watched her as her masts rose out of the water! On she came; I could see that she was a ship, a large ship, a man-of-war by her square yards. She must have sighted the island, and I thought that she would approach to survey it more carefully, when suddenly—perhaps some reef unknown to me intervened—she turned aside, and after hovering in the distance to tantalise me the more, she slowly stood away to the northward. I was almost as much overcome as when poor King was blown off the island. I now passed my days in a dull state of apathy; I had no books, no writing materials. Had I, as I might when I visited the cabin, brought away a Bible I saw on the captain's table which he had been reading for the last time, what a blessing and a comfort it would have, proved to me! I had a knife and an axe, and I often began to make various articles, but I had not the heart to finish them, for I always thought—'No one will see them, of what use will they be?' So the days passed on. Two other vessels appeared at long intervals, but passed at too great a distance to see me. One of them was becalmed off the island for some hours, and had I still possessed the boat I could without difficulty have pulled off to

her. At length I fell sick; I had long been ailing, and it is my belief that had you not appeared at the moment you did, my career on earth would soon have been over."

"God, who in His kind mercy had resolved that you should be saved, so directed our movements for your speedy rescue; so that you owe us no gratitude," observed Elton. "But I am surprised at the description you give of your sensations, I had thought that a solitary life on an island might be made very pleasant and satisfactory."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Jack, "do not believe any such thing. We are not born to live alone, of that I became convinced. An older man might have found the life less irksome, but when I took it into my head that I should never get away it became perfectly terrible. Even had I not been ill, I do not think that I could have survived many weeks longer."

Such was the outline Jack gave of his life on the island, but when once he had begun the subject he described many adventures and other details which showed that there had been rather more variety in his existence than he had at first led his hearers to suppose, and that had he had books and paper and pens, he might probably have kept up his spirits better than he appeared to have done.

"Still, all is well that ends well!" exclaimed Jack, after he had one day been talking on the subject. "I now feel sure that what I have gone through was for my ultimate benefit, and I can thank God for the merciful way in which He has dealt with me."

The *Good Hope* touched at several islands, the entire population of which had become Christians not only in name but in deed, as they evinced by their lives and their totally changed characters. She got a thorough refit at Valparaiso, on the coast of Chili, to prepare her for her voyage round Cape Horn, and five months after Jack got on board she sighted the shores of Old England. Captain Blount felt sure that he could pilot her safely into Stormount Bay, but the wind fell somewhat, and the shades of evening came on before the schooner could beat up to it. Just then a fishing-boat was sighted, and a signal was made to her that a pilot was wanted. She was soon alongside, and a stout, middle-aged man stepped on board.

"Can you pilot us into Stormount Bay, friend?" asked the captain.

"I should think I could, since I've sailed in and out of it, man and boy, for pretty nigh forty years," answered the man. "It makes no matter night or day to us now either. You see that bright light just now, beaming out from the top of the cliff it seems? That's the light the lady who lives in the tower burns every night, that (as they say) her lost son who went away to sea and has never since been heard of, may see it when he comes up Channel, and find his way into the bay. Poor lad, I'd give pretty nigh all I'm worth to see him come back, for I was the main cause, I fear, why he was sent away; and bless his honest old father, he has never owed me a grudge for it, but on the contrary, has done me all the kindness in his power,—he has taught me to be an honest man."

The fisherman might have run on much longer had not Jack, who overheard him, exclaimed, "Nor do I owe you a grudge, Dick Herring; but tell me, old friend, how are my father and mother, and sister Margery, and old Tom, good old Tom?"

"Why, bless my heart! Master Jack, is it you? Well, it's hard to believe my senses,—and you to be alive all this time!" exclaimed Dick Herring, seizing Jack's hand and wringing it nearly off. "They're all well, every one on 'em, and they will be glad to see you, that they will."

Dick now recognised Charley, and right proud he was to pilot the *Good Hope* into Stormount Bay, nor would he receive a shilling reward, not even a glass of grog to drink Jack's health, for since he had given up smuggling and all its accompanying sins, he had become a strict temperance-league man.

"No, Master Jack, I won't drink your health, but I'll pray for it, and that'll do us both more good," he observed.

Little did Mrs Askew suppose whose vessel her lantern was guiding into Stormount Bay that night. The schooner's anchor was dropped and her sails furled before nine o'clock. The voyagers had purposed waiting till the morning before going on shore, but Jack's impatience would brook no delay. Charley went first and announced himself to Becky, who immediately exclaimed under her breath, "Is he come, Master Charles?"

"Never mind," answered Charley, "Do you go in and say Charley Blount has come."

Somebody heard his voice, and that somebody, forgetting that he was not Jack himself, rushed into his arms. "Has Jack come?"

has Jack come? Dear Charley, have you brought him?" exclaimed Margery.

"I can't keep you in suspense, my sweet Margery, he has come, and is not far off," answered Charley and before he could say more, Tom, who had followed Becky to the door, darted out into the darkness, and was soon heard exclaiming, "Come in, come in, my dear boy, joy does no harm to no one!"

Mrs Askew, who had been sitting at her work opposite Captain Askew, who was reading the newspaper by a bright light, hearing an unusual commotion, rose from her seat, as he also did from his.

"What is it all about, Margery?" cried the captain, stumping to the door.

"Good news, father, good news!" cried Margery. "Charley has come back safe, and he has—"

"Has he brought our boy—has Jack been found?" asked the captain, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"Yes, dear father, he has, he has!" cried Margery.

"Then let me have him here, and thank God!" cried the old sailor, stretching out his arms; and Jack, who had been hauled in by Tom, overheard him, and in another second, bounding up the stairs, was folded in those arms, with his mother and Margery clinging to his neck and weeping tears of joy.

The evening was indeed a happy one, and not till a late hour did any of the inmates of Stormount Tower think of retiring to rest.

While Mrs Askew lived, the light in the Tower was always, as before, lit at night, and on her death a lighthouse was built in its place. Charley Blount at a very early age, got command of a fine trader to India and Australia, and on the death of her parents Margaret Askew became his wife, while Jack was chief mate with Captain Blount for many years; and when the latter came to live on shore, Jack took command of a fine ship he had built, called *The Stormount Tower*.

The End.
